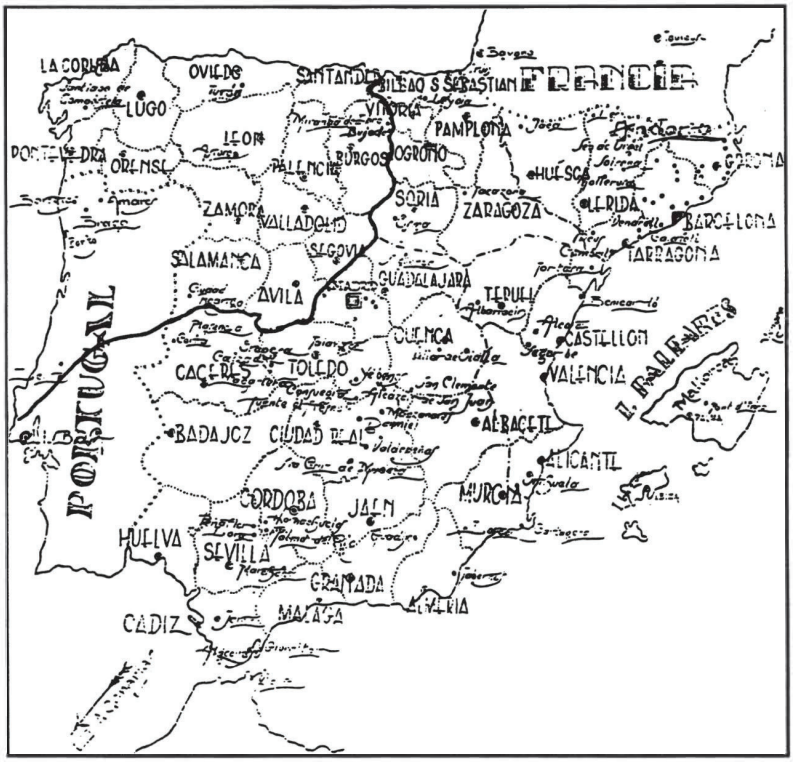
The Martyrs of Turón and Tarragona



Map of Spain in the 1930s. The heavy line marks the boundary of the Institute's District of Valladolid.

The Martyrs of Turón and Tarragona

The De La Salle Brothers in Spain 1934–1939

by
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Abbreviations

CC	Congregatio pro Causis Sanctorum, *Relatio et vota Congressus Peculiaris . . . super dubio an constet de martyrio . . . die 9 Decembris an. 1988 habita*, Rome, 1988
JD	Javier Domingo, FSC, "Hermanos mártires de España" in *Efemerides lasalianas*, Madrid, 1951
LM	*Los mártires de Turón: 50° anniversario 1934–1984*, 2 vols., Valladolid, 1984
NM	Aniceto Joaquín, FSC, *Nos Martyrs*, 3d. ed., Madrid, 1956
NT	Institut des Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes, *Nos Martyrs de Turón*, Paris and Valladolid, 1935
PG	Pedro Chico González, FSC, *Testigos de la escuela cristiana*, Valladolid, 1989
PG-M	Pedro Chico González, FSC, *Mensajeros de la escuela cristiana*, Valladolid, 1989 (a condensed version of *Testigos de la escuela cristiana*)

Foreword

The Christian Church has a long tradition of honoring those who have taken literally the hard sayings of the Gospel, giving up everything—family, riches, and even life itself—for the sake of the kingdom of God. The earliest instances of the cult of such exemplary Christians are those of the martyrs who gave their lives rather than capitulate to the tyranny of pagan imperial Rome. In the Church's long history, martyrdom of a different sort began to be recognized and canonized: the so-called white martyrdom of holy men and women who, in life-long fidelity or dramatic conversion and repentance, took up their cross daily to follow Christ.

The method of identifying these heroes of the Christian faith evolved over the centuries from an informal process of local and spontaneous acclaim to the present system of a careful and juridical scrutiny of candidates for ecclesial and public honors to be declared among the blessed in heaven and, in the case of canonized saints, to be worthy of veneration and imitation throughout a church catholic and universal.

The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools has been fortunate in recent years in having several of its members raised to the honors of the altar, the traditional expression for beatification and canonization. In 1900 John Baptist de La Salle, the Founder of the Brothers, was the first to be canonized. Since then Brothers Benilde Romançon, Miguel Febres Cordero, and Mutien-Marie Wiaux have been canonized; Brothers Solomon, Arnold, and Scubilion have been beatified, that is, declared blessed for the holiness of their lives and the impact of their heroic example on the Christian community.

The beatification in 1990 of the Spanish Brothers who died for the faith in Turón in 1934 and Tarragona in 1937 has more than doubled the number of members of the Institute of De La Salle who have achieved the formal recognition of the Church for their sanctity, realized in fidelity to their vocation as Christian educators. This event is reason enough to acquaint the

English-speaking members of the Lasallian family with the story of these newly blessed sons of De La Salle.

These Spanish Brothers, all of them young both in age and in length of service, died, as did the martyrs of old, innocent victims of the hatred and violence unleashed against their witness as Christians. Such a fate always involves the element of chance. Why these Brothers and not others engaged in the same enterprise? As the narrative to follow will show, there were, in fact, many others who were called to suffer the same fate in the same circumstances and for the same reason.

Another more profound question arises when the death of the Brothers is viewed in light of the complicated political history and special circumstances of the Spanish nation in a state of transition into the mainstream of the modern world. Christians who have been raised in an English-speaking, Anglo-Saxon culture find it difficult not to sympathize with political liberalism, which advocates religious pluralism, freedom of worship, relative autonomy for the secular world, and the separation of church and state. If the Brothers gave their lives to oppose such an agenda, what is there to celebrate? Is it possible that they died for the wrong cause?

These events are even more difficult to understand because of the distance between them and the experience of the English-speaking reader who learns of them for the first time. How empathize with a situation geographically and culturally removed by many thousands of miles, and historically remote by a period of more than 50 years? As an ardent antifascist *and* anti-Marxist, such a distant spectator might be excused for invoking "a plague on both your houses" when addressing the complexities of Spanish politics in the 1930s.

That attitude was hardly the mood in the Spain of the time. As these lines are being written, word comes of the death at the age of 93 of Dolores Ibarruri, a Basque left-winger and erstwhile leader of the Spanish Communist party, who was known as *La Pasionaria* (the Passion Flower). She is quoted in the *New York Times* obituary (November 13, 1989) as saying in a broadcast to the Spanish Republicans in 1936, "It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees! They shall not pass (*No pasarán*)!" This slogan became the battle cry of the Popular Front and the dying Spanish Republic. Now, 50 years later, a crowd estimated at 50,000 came to pay their respects

as her body lay in state at the Communist headquarters in Madrid at a time "when the world in which she believed and for which she fought is falling apart," in the words of the Spanish Minister of Culture (*Ibid.*, November 17, 1989).

The fervor of the Catholic party on the other side, determined to preserve Spain as a Catholic nation in the monarchist tradition, was equally intense. The battle cry for them was "Long live Christ the King! Long live Spain!" Thousands of bishops, priests, Brothers, nuns, and lay Catholics died with these words on their lips.

The opposition between the two sides was only intensified by the support that came from abroad, the Soviet Marxists supporting the left and the German and Italian Fascists supporting the right. As the tide of battle turned in favor of the forces of General Francisco Franco, the victorious Nationalists succeeded in replacing the dictatorship of the proletariat with a right-wing dictatorship in the Fascist tradition.

In this confrontation, it would not be accurate to say that the De La Salle Christian Brothers were caught in the middle. They stood unequivocally on the side of the right, in the theological more than in the political sense, but in Spain at that time it was not possible to separate the two. From the beginning, the Brothers as a group were singled out as the special targets of the left, for two reasons. First, they were intensely Catholic and consecrated religious men, fiercely loyal to the Catholic Church. Second, they were dedicated to educating, even indoctrinating, the younger generation of Spaniards into the truths of the Catholic faith, obedience to the Church and its hierarchy, and promotion of a socially responsible laity committed to the cause known as Catholic Action.

It will become clear in the narrative to follow that the Brothers who met their death in Turón and Tarragona were victims of a vendetta against the Church that had nothing to do with their personal political views. They were executed simply because they were religious men engaged in the Christian education of youth, faithful to their vow to associate together in the work of the schools to "procure the glory of God as far as they were able and as far as God would require of them."

In presenting the story of these newest Lasallians to be raised to the honors of the altar, the author hopes that religious teachers everywhere may be encouraged by the example

of their courage and constancy, and even better, that some young persons who are now in their twenties, as were most of these Brothers when they died, might be motivated to realize that the vocation of a religious educator is a calling worthy of surrendering life itself.

Is such a vocation likely to lead to martyrdom? In a meditation he prepared for the feast of Blessed Brother Solomon, martyred during the French Revolution, Brother Clair Battersby remarks that martyrdom is a gratuitous grace, in no way dependent on our merits. This is encouraging for those who, like the Spanish martyrs, have no special claim to distinction, no reputation for heroic virtue, and no apparent likelihood of being proposed for canonization.

Yet God gives his choicest graces where he will. "Even we might become martyrs," Brother Battersby writes, "if the occasion should arise, for we have within us reserves of fortitude and moral courage lying dormant and unsuspected which, with the grace of God, would enable us to overcome obstacles that at first sight might appear terrifying and insurmountable."

In the violent world in which we live, it is not unthinkable that any Christian—cleric, lay, or religious—might be called upon suddenly and without preparation to meet death dramatically in witness to the Gospel. As these lines are being stored in the computer, the front page of today's newspaper features the shocking story of the ruthless slaughter of six Jesuit priests and educators dedicated to the same cause of justice and peace in El Salvador. Most readers of these pages, however, will probably die peacefully in bed. In either case, all any Christian can do is to accept the challenge of each day as it comes, but meanwhile be alert to each successive divine call in whatever form it appears, to follow wherever it may lead, in the words of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, "without any thought of turning back."

Luke Salm, FSC
Manhattan College
November 17, 1989

Part One
Turón 1934

1
The Political Situation in Spain in 1934

The revolutionary and counter-revolutionary currents that dominated the political situation in Spain in 1934 can be understood only in the light of a long history. The turning point in that history came about as the forces that had precipitated the French Revolution made their inevitable impact south of the Pyrenees.

Spain in the 19th Century

The French Revolution and the political theories of the Enlightenment on which it was based inevitably had their influence in Spain. There the tradition of an absolute monarchy and a close alliance between the crown and the Roman Catholic Church had been in force for centuries. After the expulsion of Napoleon's armies, the Constitution of Cadiz of 1812 established a limited constitutional monarchy, government through ministers with real power, and a parliament with no special privilege for either the nobility or the clergy. Anticlerical measures were adopted on the French model: convents and monasteries were suppressed, the Inquisition was abolished, and freedom of the press, which the Church had consistently opposed, was declared.

Within two years, the conservative reaction was strong enough to allow King Ferdinand VII to return from exile and to resume the role of absolute monarch. For the rest of the 19th and well into the 20th century, this pattern of liberal action and conservative reaction was to dominate Spanish politics. The monarchy survived, except for a brief period of a republic in 1873, in part because of the support of the Church and the powerful, popular conservative movements, and in part by compromising with moderate liberals against the more radical republican, socialist, and anarchistic demands for

reform. Each of the successive triumphs of the liberal factions was accompanied by persecution of the Church, its clergy and religious perceived as the major obstacle to liberal political goals.

Within these major trends, there were other sources of tension to confuse the issue. The army generals opposed the generally ineffective politicians. The modernization of the urban centers contrasted with the ancient and traditional culture of the rural areas. The laissez-faire captains of industry and finance had to contend with the anarchism of the nascent labor unions. The demands for political and cultural autonomy by the Catalans and Basques stood in opposition to patriotic movements for national unity.

In the wake of World War I, the inability of the politicians to control violent conflicts between factory owners and anarchistic workers led General Primo de Rivera in 1923 to establish a strong dictatorship, with the acquiescence of King Alfonso XIII. The period that followed, between 1923 and 1930, was one of progress and relative peace, especially for the Church. Eventually, however, economic recession, political conspiracies, and discontent in the army led the king to demand that De Rivera resign. When the elections of 1931 showed strong support for a republic, especially in the cities, Alfonso went into exile rather than face a civil war. On April 14, 1931, for the second time, Spain was declared a republic.

The Second Republic

Prior to the writing of a new constitution, a provisional government was formed, presided over by a Catholic, Aniceto Alcalá Zamora, and this served at first to reassure the moderate elements. The Catholic bishops even urged Catholics to respect and obey the new regime. But a more strongly worded pastoral letter of Cardinal De Segura, Archbishop of Toledo and Primate of Spain, served as an excuse for a series of incendiary attacks in May 1931 on churches and convents that extended from Madrid to Valencia, Seville, Cádiz, Malaga, and other cities to the south. While on a trip to Rome, De Segura sent a letter of protest to the government, and on his return he was arrested and sent into exile.

Once the constitutional assembly was elected, the dominant socialist and leftist elements were able to frame a constitution, promulgated in December 1931, that was anti-Catholic in inspiration, although continuing in principle a close relationship between church and state. In January 1932 the Jesuits were expelled, and in the following months church property was confiscated, divorce was legalized, the cemeteries were secularized, crucifixes were banned from the schools, and severe restrictions were placed on the religious orders and congregations, especially those engaged in the education of the young.

These measures only succeeded in sensitizing the Catholic populace to what was happening and firming up the resolve to seek for an opportune moment to change the government. The Spanish bishops issued a formal condemnation, as did Pope Pius XI in his *Dilectissimi nobis* of 1933. Meanwhile the Catholic political leaders under José Maria Gil Robles forged a coalition of the right-wing and moderate forces, the *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (CEDA), to work against legislation described as "contrary to our ideals and our feelings as Catholics and to our very dignity as citizens."

Following the pattern set in the previous century, the new elections of November 1933 provided the opportunity for a strong reaction against the leftist and anticlerical government. The newly elected Cortes was dominated by the moderate radicals, now become respectably middle class, and by the CEDA of Gil Robles, perceived by the socialists and the leftists as a Spanish version of the Fascist tendencies then emerging in Germany and Italy.

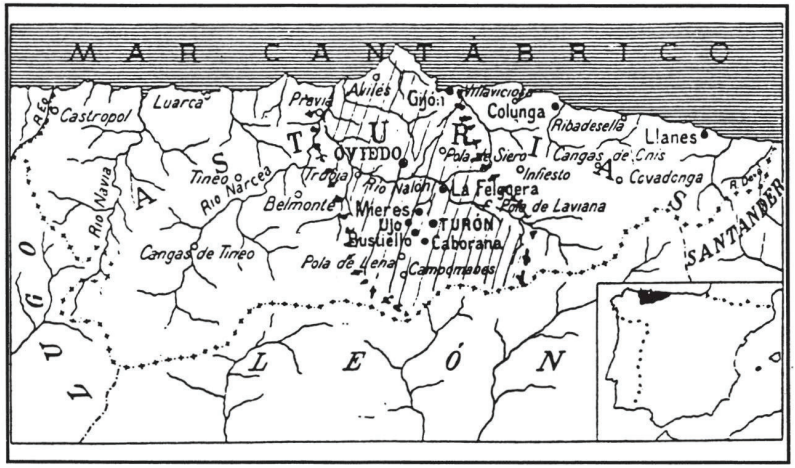
After the election, the formation of a new government was entrusted to Alejandro Lerroux, the chief of the radical party. In view of the strong showing of CEDA in the elections, there was no way that Lerroux could fail to include some Catholic conservatives as ministers in the new cabinet. For their part, the leaders of the leftist parties, especially Largo Caballero, the head of the socialist *Union General de Trabajadores* (UGT), let it be known that open revolution would be their response if any members of CEDA were appointed. This was no idle threat. Large stocks of explosives, arms, and ammunition were gathered and carefully stored to be ready for action at a moment's notice.

Although the Russian revolution of 1917 was the model and inspiration for many of the Spanish workers, there is no evidence that any of the leaders were operating under direct orders from Moscow (PG-M, 15). Nevertheless, by late September 1934 *El Socialista*, the organ of the socialist workers' party of Madrid, declared:

> Next month may well be our October [a reference to the October Revolution in Russia]. We can expect difficult and trying days that will test our resolve. The responsibility of the Spanish proletariat and its leaders is enormous. Let us have our army ready to be mobilized. (CC, 6)

The new government was announced during the evening of October 4, 1934. This was the signal for all the revolutionaries in the country to rise to action. A general strike was proclaimed for October 5. A wave of violence quickly spread from Madrid to Catalonia in the Northeast and to Asturias in the Northwest.

The revolt was quickly suppressed in the urban centers of Madrid and Barcelona. In the more remote and heavily armed Asturias, because of the industrial character of the region, the strong support of the mine workers, and their careful preparation for the revolution, the uprising there was not so easily put



Map of Asturias. The area marked with lines was held by the revolutionaries in October 1934.

down. By the evening of October 5 all of the headquarters of the Civil Guard throughout the mining towns had fallen into the hands of the revolutionaries. For 15 days confusion and terror reigned throughout the region as the leaders of the revolt lost control of the situation.

Since the Catholic Church was perceived by the leftists as the most potent force in opposition to reform, its priests and religious were singled out as special enemies of the people. Before the two weeks of terror in Asturias had run its course, 33 priests and religious had been executed, along with many of the civil guards, the officials and engineers of the mining companies, and laymen involved in Catholic Action.

In addition to the eight De La Salle Christian Brothers of Turón and the Passionist priest who happened to be staying with them, the death toll in Asturias included the vicar-general of the diocese of Oviedo, two young Passionist seminarians at Mieres, and a Carmelite priest from Oviedo who had been a student in the Brothers' school at Mieres. Don Rafael del Riego, the Director of the Mining Company at Turón and a long-time supporter of the Brothers there, was called to sacrifice his life just five days after the execution of the Brothers.

Although the October Revolution was quickly suppressed and the conservative government in Madrid remained in power for two more years, the climate for the radicalization of positions on both sides developed rapidly. Foreign influences and perceptions added to the problems already inherent in the complexity of Spanish politics. In a sense the events of October 1934 foreshadowed what was to come in the Civil War that broke out in full force in 1936. The moderate and conservative forces were perceived as inspired and supported by the German and Italian Fascists; the liberal forces, by Russian communists. For both sides, this was often the case.

The Brothers' School in Turón

During the early years of the twentieth century, the Brothers of the Christian Schools had opened six schools in the province of Asturias to provide gratuitous instruction for the children of the workers. In 1918 at Turón, a small village nestled in a valley of Asturias, the owners of the coal mining company,

impressed by the good results from similar institutions in the province, decided to found a school for the children of the workers and to entrust its direction to the Brothers.

The school opened on January 7, 1919, with about 100 pupils enrolled in four classes. Within a month the number had doubled, and soon two more classes had to be added. At first the children, largely from families of immigrant mine workers, were rowdy and undisciplined. Gradually, under the influence of the educational policies traditional with the Broth-ers, which the students had never before experienced, the un-ruly lads became serious about their studies, enthusiastic about the school, and more faithful to their religious duties.

The La Salle School at Turón

The parents, impressed by the transformation, found themselves forced to set aside their inherited proletarian prejudice against a church-related school run by "monks."

In order to intensify the Christian spirit of the students, to give them an early experience in apostolic work, and to provide for continued fidelity to their Catholic faith and practice once they left school, the Brothers organized several student asso-ciations. Among them were the Youth for Catholic Action, the Confraternity of the Child Jesus, and a Catholic Action association for former students.

As the forces for social change began to take hold throughout Spain, the remote location and the working-class population in Asturias made it easy for the socialistic labor unions and anticlerical Freemasonry to keep pressure on the Church and its educational institutions in the area. In Turón there were two personalities who seemed determined to make that town the model and vanguard of the political left: Silverio Castañón, the mayor, and Leoncio Villanueva, the head of the Freemasons.

A particular sore point with both men was the presence of the Brothers and their school, which happened to be located directly across the street from the Masonic lodge. When the laws forbidding the teaching of religion became more stringent in 1933, the mayor summoned an Inspector of Schools from Oviedo to enforce the ban. The Inspector, after examining all the textbooks, ordered any that were Catholic in tone to be replaced. The Brother Director rather cynically asked whether that meant they would have to change the mathematics texts. "Yes," the Inspector replied, "you people are capable of teaching religion even out of a math text" (PG, 29).

The Brother Director then declared that the Inspector would have to deal with the Director of the mining company, Don Rafael del Riego, since the school was under his control. Don Rafael, an ardent Catholic and supporter of the Brothers, insisted on a formal order from the Governor. When he received it, he conveniently filed it away.

Another source of annoyance to the anticlericals was to see the Brothers on Sunday morning lead their pupils two by two from the school to the parish church for Mass, despite a ban that Castañón, the mayor, himself had imposed. One Sunday early in the spring of 1933, while the students were at Mass, Castañón had Brother Isidoro Nicola, the Director, arrested and brought to Mieres for questioning. Some friends of the Brothers hired a lawyer, who was able to have the charges dismissed, since there was no law at the time that forbade taking children to Mass. Castañón did not take kindly to this reversal, swearing that one day he would have his revenge on the Brothers (CC, 49).

The situation of the Brothers took a turn for the worse when, on June 3, 1933, a law was promulgated forbidding any members of religious congregations to engage in teaching. The

Brothers seemingly had no choice at this juncture but to leave. This they did, as in fact they were forced to do all over Spain. Castañón must have thought that he had triumphed at last.

But that was not the end of the story. The superiors of the Brothers' Institute in Spain, faced with a choice of exile or adaptation, opted for the latter course. Accordingly, during the summer of 1933 the Brothers were withdrawn from the schools where they had been teaching and were reassigned. They were instructed to report to their new locations the following September, dressed in secular clothing and identified only by their secular names. This redeployment of the Brothers did not cause any serious problems in the running of the schools, since the curriculum and the teaching methods were much the same everywhere. In addition, most of the schools in Asturias were owned and supported by the mining companies, an added element of protection from government interference.

At the end of the summer vacation in 1933 a new group of professors arrived in Turón to take over what was known as the La Salle School and called the *Colegio Nuestra Señora de Covadonga*. They presented themselves as Don José (Brother Cirilo Bertrán), the Director, and his staff composed of Don Vilifrido (Brother Julián Alfredo), Don Vicente (Brother Benjamín Julián), Don Román (Brother Augusto Andrés), Don Héctor (Brother Benito de Jesús), and Don Manuel (Brother Aniceto Adolfo). The seventh member of the original group had to be transferred to Mieres before the year was out and was replaced by Don Claudio (Brother Victoriano Pío). The eighth, who had been assigned to take care of the temporal needs of the community and to serve as the cook, also was transferred at the end of the year. He was replaced by Don Filomeno (Brother Marciano José).

No one was deceived. One of the Masons was said to have remarked, "They are the same dogs, but with different collars!" The new group of Brothers wisely kept a low profile. They no longer brought their students to Mass on Sunday, but met them at the church instead. They never referred to themselves with the title Brother, but they continued to animate and to encourage the activities of the Confraternities of Mary Immaculate and of the Child Jesus, and the Youth for Catholic Action. The school building also continued to be used for meet-

ings of former students and others interested in the cause of Catholic Action.

None of what was going on in the school could have escaped the surveillance of their neighbors in the Masonic lodge across the street. A letter from one of the officials of the mining company, written after the tragic slaughter of the Brothers, has survived. It reads in part:

> Everywhere else the revolutionary activity has respected the lives of the Brothers, although their houses have sometimes been ransacked. Turón has the sad distinction of being an exception. To what else can this be attributed, if not to the Order of Masons? No one else in the town has ever complained about the Brothers. As good religious, they lead their lives withdrawn from the secular world, known, if at all, only to their students. As with the Apostles who followed Christ, it was surely out of hatred for the faith that they have been immolated. (NT, 6–7)

Despite the hostile climate in an uncertain and dangerous situation, the Brothers at Turón continued to carry out their usual duties throughout the school year that ended in the summer of 1934. With the arrival of Brother Marciano José in April of that year, and Brother Victoriano Pío in September, the little community of eight Lasallian educators was in place to begin another school year which, despite the uncertainties, promised to be much like any other. They had no way of knowing that a month later they would give witness, not by classroom instruction but with their very lives, to the meaning of the Gospel, their consecration, and their brotherhood.

2
Eight Brothers and a Passionist Priest

Before relating the story of the events leading up to the martyrdom of the Brothers at Turón in October 1934, it might be well to provide some background on the community itself and the individual men who composed this dedicated and heroic company of religious educators.

The entire religious community at Turón, as we have seen, had been reconstituted the year before, in accordance with the emergency measures adopted by the provincial superiors of the Spanish Brothers in the face of the law prohibiting religious congregations to engage in teaching. For this reason all the Brothers in Turón were newly assigned, dressed in secular clothes, and known only by their baptismal names. Of the eight to suffer martyrdom, six had come to Turón in 1933, and the other two arrived as replacements during the course of the following year.

Brother Cirilo, the Director, was the oldest at 46. Brother Marciano, the cook, was 34. The rest ranged in age from 31 to 22. The three youngest were not yet old enough to have made their final profession of perpetual vows; Brothers Augusto and Benito had triennial vows, and Brother Aniceto, the youngest, was still in annual vows. But vowed, indeed, they all were "to procure the glory of God as far as . . . God would require of them." It was quite a lot that God would require of the members of this community, young in so many ways.

The backgrounds and educational experiences of these men were quite similar. All of them began their studies to become Brothers in what was called the junior novitiate, most of them having left their families in their early teens. Brother Cirilo was considered to be relatively old when he entered the juniorate at 17, as was Brother Julián Alfredo when at 17 he made his first entry into religious life with the Capuchins. Only one of the eight, Brother Augusto, had ever attended a Brothers' school. The others learned of the Brothers' vocation from

their relatives (six of them had family members in the Institute) or through the zealous efforts of Brother Ludovico María, the recruiter as he was called (*reclutador* in Spanish) for the Institute's Province of Valladolid. Annually Brother Ludovico would canvass the parishes and elementary schools of the vil-lages, encouraging young boys to think of dedicating them-selves to God in the Institute of the Brothers. The statistics show that he had remarkable success.

Once determined to follow the call of the Lord in the footsteps of De La Salle, all of these Brothers had come as teenagers to the training center at Bujedo, the house of formation

The formation center at Bujedo

for the District (Province) of Valladolid. They remained in the juniorate to conclude their secondary studies, whereupon they entered the novitiate, also at Bujedo, and were given the reli-gious habit and a religious name. After a year of intense grounding in the apostolic spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the traditions of the Institute, they moved to an-other wing of the building for a year or two in the scholasticate as preparation to enter the classroom. They were then as-signed to teach the elementary classes in the schools scattered throughout the province.

Despite the fact that they all came from much the same background, experienced the same training in the same institution, and shared a common vocation, a common spirituality, and a common educational apostolate, each of these young men had unique character traits and talents, as well as difficulties and limitations, from which distinctive human personalities emerged.

The Brothers of the Turón community were Hermanos Cirilo Bertrán, 46; Marciano José, 34; Julián Alfredo, 31; Victoriano Pío, 29; Benjamín Julián, 26; Augusto Andrés, 24; Benito de Jesús, 24; and Aniceto Adolpho, 22.

In addition to these Brothers, there was a Passionist priest, an overnight guest who was taken for a member of the community and so shared the fate of the Brothers. He was Fa-ther Inocencio de La Inmaculada, C.P.

Brother Cirilo Bertrán (José Sanz Tejedor)

At the time of the massacre, Brother Cirilo was the Director of the community at Turón. He was born at Lerma in the province of Burgos on March 20, 1888. Very little is known of his early life. His father was employed as a road maintenance worker, which provided the family with the bare necessities of life. José would have attended the local schools of the town until he was old enough to go to work to help supplement the family income. Always serious and of a generous disposition, he first learned of the Brother's vocation from a visit to Lerma by the Brother Recruiter. At the age of 17 José went to the Brothers' juniorate at Bujedo and then to the novitiate, where he received the reli-gious habit on March 4, 1907. He began his teaching career in January, 1909, and made his perpetual profession in 1916.

As was the custom at the time, his early assignments lasted only a year or two until 1913, when he was assigned to the school at Villagarcía, where he remained for five years. There his reputation as an excellent teacher rapidly spread through the town. He was known for the clarity of his explanations and the progress made by his students, so much so that many of those who lived on the other side of town near the public school preferred to make the long trip every day to the Brothers' school to profit from his teaching and example. It was during this period also that he became notably successful in developing vocations to the priesthood and to the Brothers' Institute.

In 1918 Brother Cirilo was appointed Director of the community at Isla in the province of Santander, the first of five such appointments. Through no fault of his, the school at Isla was soon closed, as was the school at Riotuerto, where he was next assigned as Director. In 1921 he was sent to Anaz, also in the province of Santander, where he served for five years as the teacher of the senior class and, in his last year there, as Director of the Brothers' community as well.

One of his students at Anaz, who later became a priest, recalled Brother Cirilo in these words:

> Although he was usually very serious, he had such an unassuming and affable manner that it was a pleasure to be with him. In class he did not hesitate to repeat his explanations for those students who were slow to grasp the material. Before administering any punishment he always tried to make the delinquent understand why he had to be punished for his fault. The discretion he showed on such occasions produced a salutary effect on his young charges. For that reason we all loved him very much.
>
> Whenever he sensed that one or another of his students had an inclination for the priesthood or the religious life, he tried with care and discretion to cultivate such praiseworthy desires. It is because of his sensitive support that I was able to overcome the obstacles to my entrance into the seminary. Once there, I found among my fellow seminarians another ten or so of the former students of Brother Cirilo Bertrán. (NT, 16)

In 1925 Brother Cirilo was appointed Director of the school and community in the city of Santander. The Brothers who

lived and worked with him at the time remembered him as a wise administrator in the school and a loving father in the community. His concern for each of the Brothers and his even disposition gained their confidence. In addition to his administrative duties and supervision of classes, he was willing to replace Brothers when they were sick and even to do his share of the manual labor in the school and in the house. He put tremendous emphasis on community and the common life. He warned the Brothers not to develop extensive contacts outside the community, and he himself rarely left the house, even to visit his family. It was said that he never ended any of his conferences to the Brothers without extolling the happiness that comes from life in community.

One of the students at Santander whose vocation to the priesthood Brother Cirilo encouraged was Amadeo Andrés Celada. When the revolution broke out in 1934 in Asturias, this young man was a seminarian in the Passionist house of studies in Mieres. He was one of the first to sacrifice his life for the faith, only a few days before the same fate befell his former Director and the Brothers at Turón.

In 1931 Brother Cirilo was appointed Director at Valladolid, where the school formed part of the *Centro Obrero Católico*, conducted under the sponsorship of the Jesuits. The Brothers' school, specializing in commercial subjects designed to raise the level of competence of young Catholic workers, had about 350 students divided into four classes. When the Jesuit order was suppressed in Spain in 1931, the Brothers were able to keep the school going by moving to a different residence. Although he seems always to have remained calm in the face of these very difficult problems and adjustments, it was clear to the Brothers that their Director was under tremendous pressure.

In the summer of 1933 Brother Cirilo was invited to make a 30-day retreat especially designed for the Directors of the District. At the conclusion of the retreat, as part of the reshuffling of the Brothers, he was assigned to Turón as Director. The most painful thing for him in this arrangement was to have to put aside the religious habit and to appear henceforth in secular dress and under his secular name.

In his new situation Brother Cirilo was well aware that the previous Director, Brother Isidoro Nicola, had incurred the

enmity of the leftist mayor, Silverio Castañón, by continuing to teach religion and to conduct the students to Sunday Mass in defiance of the local regulations. For that reason, as well as because of his natural disposition, he was the essence of civil-ity and caution. He tried to keep on good terms with the local civil and religious authorities and, at the same time, to keep a low profile. He encouraged the Brothers to show themselves in public as little as possible and to concentrate on the work in the school.

It was all in vain. A moment came, a year after Brother Cirilo arrived in Turón, when neither reason nor justice would be able to prevail. The ultimate demand on this *capitán sereno*, as one author has described him (PG, 181), would be to lead his charges with courage and serenity to the ultimate confron-tation with the forces of hatred and violence.

Brother Marciano José (Filomeno López López)

Brother Marciano was born in 1900 in El Pedregal, a small village in the province of Guadalajara. His parents were staunch Catholics, and young Filomeno was very much attached to them. But early on he began to think seriously of going to Bujedo, where Brother Gumersindo, an uncle who had entered the Institute of the Brothers after his wife died, was the infir-marian. Not only had Brother Gumersindo brought his own son, Santiago, into the Insti-tute with him, but also, on his visits home, he spent much of his time promoting vocations among the young boys of El Pedregal. It is not surprising, then, that young Filomeno, at

the age of 12, left home to join his uncle and his cousin and enter the junior novitiate of the Brothers at Bujedo.

At first Filomeno fitted very well into the routine of the juniorate. He was well liked by his companions and was known to be especially encouraging to any new arrivals who were finding it difficult to adjust to a strictly regulated lifestyle. Determined above all to become an effective religious educator, he applied himself seriously to his studies. Hard work coupled with a fine native intelligence produced excellent results and augured well for his future as an effective and perhaps brilliant teacher.

Soon, however, young Filomeno began to experience intense pain in his ears. Despite the attentive care of the infirmarian, Brother Gumersindo, the condition only worsened. The superiors decided that it would be better to send the young man home, in the hope that the change of climate might effect a cure. In time the pain ceased, but Filomeno was left almost totally deaf.

One of his companions back in El Pedregal was Pedro Reyes, who would one day become his brother-in-law. Years later Pedro remembered Filomeno as a very alert and talented young man. After Filomeno returned home from the juniorate, the two of them worked as field hands and were often together. Filomeno confided to his friend that he was determined to return to the Brothers (LM-I, 98). Even if he couldn't work as a teacher in the classroom, he was ready to promote the cause of Christian education in any capacity where he might be useful. His appeal was finally heard, and he was admitted to the Brothers' novitiate at Bujedo, where he was given the religious habit and the name Marciano José on November 4, 1916.

After completing the novitiate program, Brother Marciano was kept at Bujedo and assigned to the laundry, which serviced all the various departments of the house of formation. He also had charge of the sacristy and took particular pleasure in decorating the old Roman church that served the community as a chapel. He worked for ten years in this humble capacity, always happy to be of assistance to his Brothers in any way he could. In 1925 he made his perpetual profession, and from then on his confreres noted a developing intensity in his personal religious life, especially in his practices of devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

In 1928 Brother Marciano was transferred out of the seclusion of the formation center at Bujedo and given a series of assignments in auxiliary services for the various apostolic communities of the District of Valladolid. He showed himself so uncomplaining and ready to be of any service that the superiors often moved him from one community to another on very short notice. Thus in 1928 alone he was sent to three different communities to cover emergency situations. He was usually employed as the community cook, with responsibility also for doing the shopping, but other manual tasks were not beyond him. On one occasion he was sent back to Bujedo when they needed a mechanic to repair the farm machinery that had broken down.

Brother Marciano was happiest when obedience called him to serve in a Brothers' community attached to one of the schools. This work gave him much joy because it brought him close to the students and because he realized that he was making a contribution, however indirect, to the educational apostolate.

On his occasional visits home during the summer months, Brother Marciano had the opportunity to exchange views on the religious life with his brother Julio, who was studying for the priesthood with the Scalopini Fathers. When both of them were home together during their mother's last illness, it was Brother Marciano who persuaded Julio to extend his visit beyond what had been allowed, in order to care for their dying mother (LM-I, 98). The two of them did much to promote religious vocations among the villagers and within their own family. Two of their cousins joined the Sisters of the Holy Family, and two of the nephews became diocesan priests. Another nephew, who became a Scalopini priest, contributed an extensive essay to the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the martyrdom (*Ibid.*).

As the revolutionary movements in Spain assumed more and more of an antireligious character, Brother Marciano was heard to say one day that the persecution was due to "our own negligence in the service of God." "If it becomes necessary for some of us to shed our blood," he declared, "I am ready to do that for the sake of the Church and our country" (NT, 23).

Whenever he wrote home about the difficulties that the teaching Brothers were having with the increasingly restrictive

measures imposed by the leftist government, he always used the word "we" as an expression of solidarity with the Brothers in the classroom (PG, 219).

In the spring of 1934 the Brother cook at Turón, unable to endure the tense situation there, wrote to the superiors with an urgent request for a transfer. The ever-available Brother Marciano was sent from Mieres to Turón to replace him. Six months later he was able to pay with his life rather than sacri-fice his solidarity with the teaching community. When the Brothers were arrested on October 4, 1934, Brother Marciano was the doorkeeper and the cook. He was not recognized at first as a member of the community. When asked what his function was, he could have escaped by claiming to be only a servant, which in a sense he was. Instead, he replied simply, "I am the cook and a religious." He was then taken away with the rest.

Brother Julián Alfredo (Vilfrido Fernández Zapico)

Born in Cifuentes de Rueda in the province of León in December 1902, young Vilfrido was known to the family by the nickname "Viyo." He was a happy young fellow, playful, and one to whom studies came easily. His mother died when he was quite young, and from then on he spent more and more time in the company of his uncle, the pastor of a remote parish. That circumstance, coupled with a naturally pious disposition, gradually awakened within him the desire to follow a religious vocation. As soon as it could be arranged, he entered the minor seminary of the Capuchins at León.

When Vilfrido reached the age of 17, he was admitted to the Capuchin novitiate at Bilbao. Within a few months, however, he fell sick and had to be sent back home in the hopes of restoring his failing health. Unable to engage in heavy work of any kind, he devoted much time to reading, and so became known in the small village for his learning and wisdom. He attended Mass every morning. In the afternoon he would gather together his young friends, over whom he had a great influence, to teach them catechism (LM-I, 111).

When he was 22 years old, Viyo became acquainted with the Brothers for the first time when the Brother Recruiter came to the village where his uncle was pastor. Since Viyo's application for readmission to the Capuchins had been rejected, he was delighted with the encouraging reply from the Director of the Brothers' novitiate. On February 4, 1926, accompanied by his uncle, he arrived at Bujedo. He was much older and more experienced than his fellow postulants and novices, who were impressed with his maturity, his tranquility, and his sense of values. He never spoke of the time he spent with the Capuchins; in fact, it was only in 1984 at the 50th anniversary celebration of his martyrdom that his Capuchin experience became generally known among the Brothers.

Vilfrido received the religious habit on August 14, 1926, with the name Julián Alfredo. A year later he made his first vows. After two more years in the scholasticate he was assigned to the school and community at Caborana, not far from Turón, where he remained from 1929 until 1933. In the summer of 1932 he made his perpetual profession.

The Brothers who lived with him remembered that, although he was always cheerful and amiable, he had a great love for silence and did not hide his displeasure when noisy arguments disturbed the peace of the community. He also had an intense respect for the superiors and would often come to their defense against those who criticized them. He was serious in his devotion to the preparation of his classes, scrupulous in his determination never to waste time. On holidays he enjoyed spending his free time helping the cook in the kitchen, for which service the Brothers often had occasion to express their appreciation.

He was equally exact in his religious observance. Like so many others of his confreres, he had a special devotion to the

Blessed Virgin, whom he often addressed as "our good Mother." He applied his favorite maxim, "To Jesus through Mary," to his relations with the students in the school. He encouraged them to wear the scapular, to join confraternities devoted to Mary, and to say her rosary together after school.

Brother Julián was an excellent catechist. One of his former students reported, "We used to love his catechism lessons because he always explained things so well and so clearly. Before beginning he would always have us pray with great attentiveness, reminding us that we were about to begin the most important lesson of the school day" (NT, 31). In his last years at Caborana he was assigned to prepare the candidates for first communion. So successful was he, and so widespread did his reputation spread in the town, that several parents whose children did not attend the Brothers' school asked to have them enrolled in Brother Julián's preparatory sessions.

His zeal as a catechist extended even to his visits home during the summer vacation. His nephew, Señor Sagrario González, testified that the memory of these visits was still vivid 50 years later. Among other things, he recalled:

> People remember how, as soon as he had arrived in the village, he would begin to teach catechism every day. The pastor of the parish gave him full permission to do this as he wished, realizing full well that he would not be able to keep him for the remainder of the year. The numbers attending the catechism doubled on these occasions by reason of the simplicity, the competence, and the joy manifested by Brother Viyo. These catechism lessons were held on the steps of the church. When the catechism was over, Brother would lead the youngsters into the church to teach them religious hymns.
>
> Still today, everyone is agreed that Viyo had an exceptional ability to teach singing. His method was continual repetition, and he would not stop until the music was perfectly mastered. His students learned quickly and sang with such precision that it seemed a bit exaggerated. If the choristers were preparing to sing publicly in the church, he wouldn't allow them to leave until they could sing magnificently. Many villagers still have engraved in their minds the number of times they had to repeat the hymns. (LM-I, 112)

In the extensive transfers among the Brothers in the fall of 1933, Brother Julián learned that he was being sent to the school at Turón, on the other side of the mountain from the valley of the Aller where he had been for four years. He re-ceived the new assignment with his customary tranquility. The people of Turón were rather different from those in Cabo-rana, with more immigrant workers, most of them very politi-cized, but the students, who were the principal concern of the Brothers, were much the same as everywhere.

A year later, after becoming adjusted to the new and more hostile climate in Turón, Brother Viyo, together with his companions, was called upon to face the full force of that hostility as it erupted in revolutionary violence.

Brother Victoriano Pío (Claudio Bernabé Cano)

Born at San Millan de Lara near Burgos in 1905, Claudio Bernabé was not quite 14 years old when, in August 1918, he entered the junior novitiate of the Brothers at Bujedo. He began his novitiate three years later. He took for his motto, "To do what the Rule requires, no matter what it costs."

Upon completing the scholasticate in 1925, Brother Victoriano was assigned to the Brothers' school in Palencia. Except for a short period in La Santa Espina, he would remain there for the next nine years. Palencia would one day be the scene of an enormous outpouring of clergy and the faithful as the relics of the martyred Brothers were being transferred from Turón to Bujedo.

Brother Victoriano seems to have been a very intense and even impatient sort of person. He never wasted a moment, and

he could be quite critical of confreres who spent their time reading newspapers and magazines instead of preparing their lessons or promoting their professional development. As the Rule required, he was not slow during the weekly advertisement of defects to point out the failings of his Brothers, but he was equally stern with himself. Whenever he was guilty of impatience with others or a sharp retort, he always tried to make amends. He often was heard to say, "If I were not able to recognize my own failings, I could not call myself a religious, much less a son of Saint John Baptist de La Salle" (NT, 25). Much attached to his own vocation, he would break into tears whenever he learned that one of the Brothers he knew had left the Institute.

This intensity carried over to his professional studies and his work with the students. Talented in music and art, he had a contagious enthusiasm, and his charges vied with one another to produce the results he expected of them. As an assistant to the prefect of studies, Brother Victoriano was a stern disciplinarian who would not suffer the least disorder. Usually reserved in his manner, he was nonetheless loved as well as respected by his students. He willingly found time to provide extra classes to help those who were less gifted keep up the pace. For this the parents were most grateful.

The fact that he remained in Palencia for such a long time also contributed to the general appreciation that he won for his artistic talents, his teaching ability, and his influence on his students. When a prolonged illness kept him out of class for a three-week period in 1932, groups of students came every day to inquire after him and to promise prayers for his recovery.

Brother Victoriano was an especially gifted choirmaster. The school choir regularly performed under his direction at services in the local parish, as well as in the school. On one occasion, during the Corpus Christi procession, the Bishop of Palencia stopped in front of the school choir to hear to its conclusion a hymn they were singing in honor of the Blessed Sacrament. Often profusely congratulated on the performance of his choir, Brother Victoriano would only say that the glory belonged to God alone, and that he was grateful that the reputation of his choir motivated so many people to come to the religious ceremonies.

As the political situation in Spain started to deteriorate, Brother Victoriano began to sense the danger. On a visit home he confided to a friend, "This is the last time I will be able to come back to see my relatives" (NT, 27). In the summer of 1933, when almost all the Brothers were being transferred, an exception was made in his case, and he was allowed to remain in Palencia, much to the satisfaction of the students and their parents. Like the other Brothers, however, he had to adopt secular dress and be known by his secular name.

A year later, in September 1934, the superiors were faced with the need to replace a seriously disturbed Brother in the Turón community who had been in charge of the senior class. An experienced teacher of unusual talent and dedication was needed, and Brother Victoriano seemed to be the man. Although it must have cost him a great deal to leave a situation where he had worked successfully for so long and had became so respected and loved, he neither objected nor hesitated. Twenty days after his arrival in Turón the revolution broke out in Asturias, and he, along with the others, was arrested. Veneration and respect had given way to violence and hatred.

Brother Benjamín Julián (Vicente Alonso Andrés)

Vicente Alonso was born at Jaramillo de la Fuente in the province of Burgos on October 27, 1908, only three weeks after his cousin Federico. The two of them were to become inseparable companions, so much so that they were often referred to as "the twins." At school there was a friendly rivalry between them, but Federico remembered that it was always Vicente who was the more aggressive. Persistence and determination were to be the principal elements in his character in the difficult years ahead.

In the spring of 1920, when Vicente was only 11 years old, the Brother Recruiter came through Jaramillo on his annual tour through the country villages. He spoke about the vocation of a religious educator, encouraging all who might be interested in coming to Bujedo to keep in touch with the local pastor, Father Felipe Arribas. Vicente went at once to declare his desire to enter the Brothers' juniorate. "You are too young,"

the pastor told him. "They do not accept boys until they are 12." But Vicente persisted. He came back a month later, asking Father Felipe to write the request for admission.

The Brother Recruiter came in August to say that Vicente could not be admitted with the September class, because he would not be 12 until October. Since the lad was so obviously committed to his vocation and determined to follow it at any cost, the Recruiter contacted the Brother Provincial. He noted that it would be a shame not to admit such a promising candidate on the technicality of a mere 20 days or so. The Provincial agreed to make an exception.

Thus, in September 1920, not yet 12 years old, Vicente left home to enter the junior novitiate of the Brothers at Bujedo. In his letters home, he always enclosed a special little note for Federico, painting a glowing picture of life in the juniorate. In the following year Federico joined his cousin at Bujedo. The two of them were given the religious habit on the eve of the feast of the purification of Mary, as it was then called, February 1, 1925. Perhaps because he was, and looked, so young, Vicente was given the name Brother Benjamín Julián.

A year later, when it was time to make first vows, the other novices were surprised to learn that the novitiate of Brother Benjamín was to be prolonged for another three months. To this day it is not clear whether this was at his own request, or whether the superiors made the decision because of his youth and short stature (PG, 250). When Brother Benjamín finally made his first vows on May 15, 1926, the two cousins were again together in the scholasticate (LM-I, 137).

After a little more than a year in the scholasticate, Brother Benjamín was assigned in 1927 to the school in Santiago de Compostela, where he would remain for the next six years. His

youthful appearance only aggravated the difficulties experienced by so many teachers as they begin to face the challenges of the classroom. Through these troublesome early days, he maintained his serenity and determination. Under the guidance of the Brother Director, an experienced and understanding educator named Brother Paciano Luis, the diminutive Brother Benjamín was gradually able to gain ascendancy over his young charges.

Federico remained in the scholasticate until March 1928, when he was assigned to the school at Ujo. The two cousins maintained a lively correspondence. In the summer of 1928 they enjoyed together their first visit back home. Their visit coincided with that of Brother Victoriano Pío, a member of the Palencia community and later one of the Turón martyrs, who was related to the Alonso family. The two cousins were able to go to San Millán on Sunday. "We sang the Mass of the Angels," Frederico wrote, "and spent the whole day in the company of the parents and friends of Brother Victoriano Pío" (LM-I, 137).

By the time Brother Benjamín had spent six years teaching at Santiago, he had achieved a notable mastery over his students, as illustrated by an incident that took place in 1933. A group of normal school students had come to the Brothers' school to observe classroom procedures. One of them, after visiting the class of Brother Benjamín, asked the Director how a Brother who was so small in stature and so youthful looking was able to hold the respect and attention of the 70 pupils in his class. The Director replied, "The reason is that the children regard neither the size of the teacher nor his age. All they see is a heart that loves them with an unselfish love" (NT, 35).

In 1933 Brother Benjamín, together with his cousin and 38 other Brothers from the Districts of Valladolid and Madrid, made the 30-day retreat preparatory to final profession. This time there was no question of a delay. Brother Benjamín confided to his cousin that, as far as he was concerned, he had already made his definitive commitment in the novitiate.

At the close of the retreat, Brother Benjamín learned that he had been assigned to Turón. The two cousins, dressed in secular clothes, took leave of one another for the last time in this world, as Brother Benjamín headed for Turón and the road that would lead to his martyrdom.

Brother Augusto Andrés
(Román Martínez Fernández)

Román Martínez was born on May 6, 1910, in the cathedral city of Santander on the northern coast of Spain, where he attended the Brothers' school. His father died while Román was still very young, and his mother found herself with the burden of raising her three children, relying greatly on the young Román, who was the oldest. As soon as he was of age, she enrolled him in Saint Joseph's School, conducted by the Brothers as part of the *Círcolo Católico* in Santander.

Gifted with a fine native intelligence, Román was a diligent student as well, usually winning top honors in the regular examinations. When he was eight years old he made his first Holy Communion, and from then on he became a frequent communicant. Mass was celebrated daily for the students at the chapel of the Brothers' school, and it was there that he preferred to go every morning to encounter his Lord. In those days one had to be fasting from midnight to receive Holy Communion that day. When Román, whose health had always been somewhat precarious, fainted one day in the middle of the Mass, the Brother Director suggested that from then on he attend Mass in his own parish, closer to home, where he could have a good breakfast afterwards before reporting to school.

Román was not quite 12 years old when he created much consternation in the family by announcing his desire to enter the Brothers' Institute. His mother, barely adjusted to the loss of her husband, was strongly opposed to having her oldest child leave home while he was still so young and while, she felt, she still needed his presence and support. Román pleaded with her, but in vain.

In the midst of these entreaties and discussions, Román fell seriously ill, to the point where it was feared he might die. His classmates began a novena to Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, but as the days went by, his condition only became worse. Finally the doctor, despairing of his life, recommended that the mother send for the priest to administer the last sacraments.

During the course of the night that everyone expected would be his last on this earth, Román fell into a deep sleep. Suddenly he awakened, the fever gone, and said to his mother with a smile, "Now will you let me go to Bujedo?" "Yes, my child," was all that she could say in gratitude for the remarkable recovery (LT, 38).

Entering the juniorate in October 1922, the young lad found ample opportunity to intensify his devotional practices. In addition to being active in the Eucharistic Crusade, he became a noted advocate of the devotion to Our Lady recommended by Blessed Simon Grignon de Montfort. Four years later, at the age of 16, he was given the religious habit and the name Augusto Andrés on the eve of the Assumption of Mary, August 14, 1925.

Two years of scholasticate followed his novitiate, and in the fall of 1928 he was assigned to the school at Valladolid. He seems to have been successful in the classroom from the start, helped no doubt by his skill in drawing and calligraphy. His students on entering the class would find the blackboard filled with artistic designs and lettering that would both illustrate and enliven the lesson to follow.

During most of his life in the Institute, Brother Augusto had to endure continual pleas from his mother to return home. She never quite reconciled herself to the separation. The poor Brother would sometimes be reduced to tears in his determination to persevere, saying, "I will follow my vocation, and I will not do anything else. Please pray that God will grant me this favor" (LT, 41). On one occasion he sent his mother a holy picture of the Blessed Virgin, which she kept among her treasures. On it he had written, "Why did I come to Bujedo? In order to become a saint. I have only one soul to save, and I will die only once" (LM-I, 152).

In 1931 the requirement of universal military training meant that Brother Augusto had to report to Palencia to enter

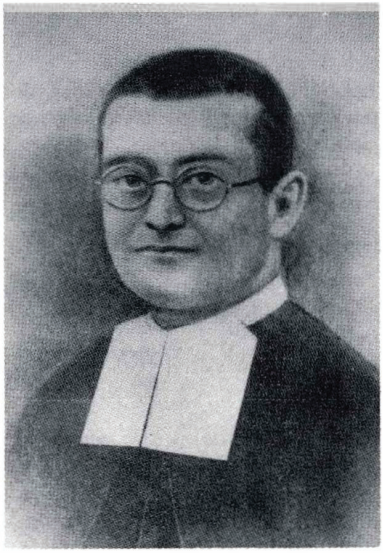
the service, where he was assigned to the motorcycle brigade. Because of his chronic bad health, his stay was short, but it was long enough for him to impress his comrades with his spirit of valor and forthrightness, which would be evident again in the crisis which lay ahead. When the term of his service was completed, Brother Augusto was assigned to the community at Palencia, which he had used as a contact point with the Brothers whenever he could get away from the barracks. Five years later, when the relics of the Turón martyrs were passing through Palencia to their final burial place at Bujedo, his former comrades from the battalion provided a wreath to crown his casket.

Towards the end of 1932 Brother Augusto again fell seriously ill. This time it was a case of double pneumonia with complications deriving from an intestinal infection. During his illness, and later convalescence in the infirmary at Bujedo, he was a model of patience in suffering, acceptance of the remedies prescribed, and resignation to the designs of Providence in his regard. Once more his life was spared, but only to confront a crisis of a very different sort.

Once sufficiently recovered, he was sent in 1933 to the school at Turón. He expressed his joy at being assigned to a gratuitous elementary school where there was so much good that he could do. When concern for his safety in the midst of a turbulent mining area was expressed, he simply replied that he might thereby be able more quickly to go to heaven.

At the time of his death a year later, Brother Augusto Andrés was not yet old enough to make his final profession. According to the testimony of his sister María, when their mother learned of his execution she went into a deep depression, for a long time unreconciled to this new separation that, in this world at least, would prove to be permanent (LM-I, 152).

Brother Benito de Jesús (Héctor Valdivielso Sáez)



Of all the Brothers martyred at Turón, one of the youngest and at the same time one of the most colorful was Brother Benito de Jesús. For one thing, he was not born in Spain but in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Shortly after Héctor's birth in 1910 his father, Señor Benigno Valdivielso, a merchant, moved to Mexico, where he had better business opportunities. But the turbulent political and religious climate in revolution-ary Mexico forced him to send his wife and children to Briviesca in the province of Burgos in Spain.

Even as a child, Héctor liked to draw and very soon developed a fine hand at calligraphy. Fortunately his mother, and later his sister, kept many of his childhood school exercises and drawings, elaborately decorated greeting cards, and let-ters, as well as photographs and newspaper clippings, more than 100 of them in all. Some of these have been reproduced in the memorial volume prepared at Valladolid for the 50th anni-versary of the Turón martyrs (LM-II, Appendix IV).

In 1921 Héctor and his brother José Alfredo, who was two years older, resolved together to enter the junior novitiate of the Brothers at Bujedo. After writing to their father in Mexico to get his approval, their mother agreed to let them go. Two years later the superiors at Bujedo asked for candidates will-ing to prepare themselves for a missionary apostolate. Héctor was among the first to volunteer. After again obtaining his father's approval, he was transferred to the missionary ju-niorate at the Brothers' international headquarters, then at Lembecq, Belgium, where he arrived in August 1924.

Héctor was happy there and wrote home to his mother as often as he was allowed. In one letter he told her that among his companions studying for the Brothers' foreign missions were "Frenchmen, Italians, Germans, Czechs, Englishmen, and Americans, but," he added with some pride, "we Spaniards are the most numerous" (PG-M, 64). In another letter he gave a description, complete with drawing and map, of a holiday excursion through Belgium. In yet another he described the game of basketball, then unknown in Spain, and included a drawing of a basketball court.

Héctor received the religious habit and the name Benito de Jesús on the eve of the feast of the Holy Rosary, October 6, 1926. He made his first vows a year later, just seven years and two days before he would be challenged to give his life for the faith. He did not live long enough to be eligible for perpetual profession.

During his years at Lembecq, Brother Benito seems already to have had a preoccupation with the theme of martyrdom, especially since his father was in Mexico, where the Church was being vigorously persecuted. In 1926 he wrote to him, "I would consider myself happy indeed if, like you, I could be living in the midst of a persecution that would procure for me the palm of martyrdom." When Blessed Brother Solomon was beatified in 1927, Brother Benito, after describing the celebration at Lembecq, reminded his father that here was a model for him to imitate, living as he was in a country where the faith was undergoing persecution. "If God gives you the grace of martyrdom," he added, "know that I, your son, will be envious of you" (NT, 45).

When his novitiate was over, the superiors decided that Brother Benito should return to Spain to complete his studies in the scholasticate at Bujedo. Two years later, at the beginning of the school year in 1929, Brother Benito was assigned to the elementary school at Astorga, where close to 100 young boys were put into his charge. He was equal to the challenge. It seems that authority came to him easily and naturally. In a short time he was successful enough to be assigned the direction of the more advanced classes.

Apart from the classroom, the apostolic zeal of Brother Benito found an outlet in the Saint Tarsicius Society, named for a young saint from the early Christian era who was mar-

tyred while carrying the Blessed Sacrament to the sick. The focus of the society was devotion to the Eucharist, especially frequent communion and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. The older boys who had left the school were encouraged to sign up for periods of nocturnal adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Brother Benito did not hesitate to enlist the help of the parents in letters asking them to encourage their sons to join and to be faithful to the devotional and apostolic practices of the society.

The activities of the *Tarsicios* extended beyond the purely devotional. Brother Benito encouraged them to spend time reading good books and journals, to work for the poor and disadvantaged, to support the Church's foreign missions, and to engage in and to promote the programs of what was then called Catholic Action. In view of the anti-Catholic and anticlerical movements in Spain, this took the specific form of opposition to the Freemasons and the secularist legislation of the leftist government.

In the July 1932 issue of *Los hijos del pueblo*, published in Valladolid, a firsthand account appeared describing a meeting of the Astorga Tarsicios, which read in part:

> Our enthusiasm reached its climax in the General Assembly of Tarsicios held at Christmastime. To the cries of "Masonry will die!" and "Long live Catholic Spain!" we promised to defend, even at the cost of our lives, the sacred mission and inviolable rights of the Catholic Church. We heard with enthusiasm our president, Marlano Martínez, one of the outspoken Catholics of our city. In a very clear discourse and in vigorous language he denounced Spanish Freemasonry. At the conclusion our illustrious chaplain, Don Ramon Alonso, in a masterful synthesis exposed the current notions advocating an exclusive system of lay schools. The event was a brilliant success, and the local newspaper devoted two full columns to a favorable account of it. (LM-II, 714)

In this regard, Brother Benito himself was an ardent patriot and publicist. He wrote to his mother:

> How wonderful it is to be a Catholic publicist! When I die it would please me if they were to place on my tombstone

only these words: Here lies a Catholic publicist [*un propagandista católico*]. (PG-M, 66)

Despite his youthful 22 years, Brother Benito was not afraid to appear or speak in public on issues of concern to the Church, or to submit impassioned articles for publication, signing himself simply H. (for *Hermano*, Brother) or sometimes under the pseudonym VEZAS, derived from his father's initial and his mother's family name (Sáez). A sample from a lengthy piece that appeared in March 1933 in the Astorga *Juventud católica* reads in translation:

> Do you not see that we are descended from a valiant people? Do you not see that our history has been more brilliant than that of any other nation? With reason you say, indeed, that we are a race of valiant warriors, of giants, of titans, of heroes, of fearless lions, so that our enemies are forced to tremble when they try to brandish their swords against us. And not only have we been a valiant race, but we are also a race of Catholics, of believers, of martyrs, of saints, of soldiers of the Cross, and of renowned defenders of the Catholic Church. Spain was glorious when her sons loved the Catholic Church, and she will be even more glorious when we Spaniards all become better Catholics. In the meantime, we must keep that faith through which, as a protector and guide to her sublime goals, Spain will be Spain, and so will survive. (LM-II, 714)

His letters to his mother during this period indicate that he was well aware of the consequences of his position. He wrote:

> A religious is always likely to be persecuted, hated, insulted, rejected by society. . . . Nevertheless, I prefer my state in life a thousand times to all the other advantages that the world might have to offer. I will never leave my congregation; if they expel us, I shall have to go far away from Spain. But no matter where they may send me, you will always have a son who will love you more than if he were near to you. (NT, 45)

Brother Benito indicated that he was not sitting idly by, waiting for the ax to fall. Again, he wrote to his mother:

> If God requires it of me, I am ready to suffer prison, exile, and even death. . . . At the moment I am absorbed in my apostolic works and my studies. I don't lose a minute, and I am very happy as I await the beautiful reward that is waiting for me in paradise. Your own reward will be magnificent also, since you have offered to God two of your sons, who might have stayed by your side to help you. (*Ibid.*)

It was something of a trial for Brother Benito to learn in September 1933 that he was to be transferred from Astorga, where he was so beloved and had accomplished so much in a short time, to the school in Turón. But it did not take him long to size up the apostolic potential in his new environment. He was able to begin organizing the best of his students into an effective confraternity for their own sanctification, for reviving the Christian spirit in their families, and for contributing to the revival of the Catholic tradition in Spain. A year later his efforts in this direction were cut short as he was led away to suffer the death of a martyr, which he had so many times envisioned as the greatest grace he could receive.

Brother Aniceto Adolfo (Manuel Seco Gutiérrez)

The youngest of the Turón martyrs was born in Celada Marlantes in the province of Santander near the Burgos border on October 4, 1912. The family atmosphere was remarkably devotional. No matter how hard the day's labor in the fields, the rosary was recited in common every evening. Often the father of the family, Pío Seco, would conduct a catechism session as well. The greatest test of faith for him and for his family was to accept the death of their mother in 1918, when all of the children were still very young. The father served for years as sacristan and principal chanter in the parish church, which meant that his children were usually present with him for all the scheduled liturgical ceremonies. Of his four sons, three entered the Institute of the Brothers.

The third eldest was Manuel, a lad with an irascible temper that showed itself both at home and in school. His father

often had to rebuke him for his violent and impulsive reactions when things did not go his way. This would prove to be a life-long struggle for the boy. He worked off much of his excess energy by keeping busy at his scholastic and domestic duties. In addition, he was an energetic competitor in sports and in this way gained a certain ascendancy over his youthful companions.

At the age of 12, encouraged by Brother Ludovico María, the tireless recruiter for the District of Valladolid, Manuel resolved to join his older brother, Maximino, in the junior novitiate at Bujedo. When an aunt of his, a Dominican nun, heard of it, she said, "He has a bad temper, that one; he won't last a month in religious life!" His brother Maximino, on the other hand, insisted that from the moment he entered the juniorate, Manuel rarely showed any displays of temper and seemed, rather, to be well beloved and perfectly at ease (PG, 346). He did, however, have difficulty with some of his school subjects, but this he was able to overcome through his own persistence and the guidance of his teachers. It was a special trial for the two brothers when news reached them at Bujedo of the death of their father.

During this time Manuel developed a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, carrying her rosary wherever he went and managing to recite all 15 decades every day. On November 21, 1927, when he was 15 years old, he consecrated himself to Mary Immaculate as her slave, in a devotional practice derived from Grignon de Montfort. Every day from then on he would recite the prayer:

> O my sweet Mother, I give myself entirely to you as your slave, and to Jesus through you, my dearly beloved Mother. I promise you that I will spend this entire day doing everything for you, everything through you, everything with you. (NT, 48)

Upon entering the novitiate, he received the religious habit and a new identity as Brother Aniceto Adolfo on February 1, 1929. His brother Maximino, who had already been given the name Pío Julián, was to serve in the Institute of the Brothers until his death in 1972. Meanwhile, it seems that during the novitiate Brother Aniceto had once again to struggle with his lively temperament and emotional drives. He was heard to say often, "It is better to die than to commit a sin." He found solace in a deep attachment to Jesus Christ, "the only source of help when all others fail" (NT, 50).

In the scholasticate Brother Aniceto had to depend on his tenacity and will power to make up for what he lacked in native intelligence. This was not made easier by the onset of persistent migraine headaches. Also, by that time it was no longer sufficient for the Brothers to complete the courses at Bujedo in order to qualify as teachers under the laws imposed by the anticlerical government. An additional year of study during his first year in community was required before he could present himself for the state examinations. In this he was successful and so earned his teacher's certificate.

Brother Aniceto's first year in community was spent in Valladolid at the School of Our Lady of Lourdes, where he was assigned in August 1932. His first class numbered no fewer than 87 youngsters. He rapidly gained the ascendancy by his strict adherence to the regulations, coupled with an enthusiasm he communicated for the subjects he taught, particularly the catechism. In the community he seems to have been rather shy, keeping much to himself and devoting himself wholeheartedly to the religious exercises and the preparation of his classes.

At the end of the school year, during the vacation period of 1933, Brother Aniceto made his first and last visit home, by which time both his parents had died. He made an unforgettable impression on the townsfolk of Celada Marlantes by his regular attendance at the parish church and evident religious spirit. When news came a year later of his martyrdom, the natives vied with one another in recalling this or that detail of the short time he spent among them.

At the end of the retreats that year his younger brother Florencio completed the novitiate and pronounced his first vows. Brother Aniceto wrote to him:

I am writing these lines on the occasion of your first vows to let you know how much I hope that your gift of yourself will be entire and irrevocable, and that your determination will continue unchanged in spite of obstacles and persecutions.

Make your consecration to God with all the serenity and seriousness called for in any contract we make with the divine Majesty. Be persuaded that, if we fulfill our engagements, God will carry out his part of the bargain as it is described in the Holy Gospels.

Make a resolution to renew your vows every day and to make them the subject of your meditation at least once a week during the meditation period in the evening. Never cease to thank God for having deigned to choose three members of our family for the privilege of cooperating with him in the salvation of souls. (NT, 52)

After only one year in Valladolid, Brother Aniceto was transferred in September 1934 to Turón. In addition to his class duties, he was put in charge of the school chapel. He had just decorated it for the Mass to be celebrated for the students on the first Friday of October when the revolutionaries invaded the school. On the night the Brothers were led out to be executed, Brother Aniceto handed his rosary to the parish priest with the request that he give it as a souvenir to his brothers. Much to the regret of Maximino and Florencio, the priest lost the precious relic in the confusion that followed.

Father Inocencio de la Inmaculada (Manuel Canoura Arnau)

The priest companion of the Brothers in the sacrifice of their lives was born in 1887 in Santa Cecilia del Valle de Oro in the province of Lugo. From his early years he was impressed by the Passionist priests who came every year to the village to conduct the parish mission. His parents brought him, at the age of 15, to consult with the Passionists at the nearby monastery of Mondoñedo. Then and there the young man made up his mind to enter the Congregation. Once the arrangements were completed, he was sent to the Passionist house of studies at Peñafiel.

In 1904 Manuel entered the novitiate at Duesto, and a year later was admitted to first vows. Long years of philosophical and theological study followed until 1913, when he was ordained a priest. Most of his active ministry was spent as a professor of literature and philosophy in the houses of study conducted by the Passionists in Daimiel, Mondoñedo, and Mieres. Always at the disposal of his superiors, he would be assigned from time to time to pastoral work in the parishes, sometimes in the mining towns and sometimes in the larger urban centers such as Santander. But his talent and his disposition made the ministry of teaching the one that he preferred and the one in which he met with the greatest success.

In September 1934 Father Inocencio was reassigned to the Passionist monastery at Mieres, not far from Turón. In an atmosphere that was becoming increasingly tense, he taught courses in philosophy to the Passionist seminarians, while assisting occasionally with the priestly ministry for the nearby parishes. It was thus that he was called upon a month later to go to Turón to assist in hearing confessions in the parish and the school in preparation for the First Friday in October.

This assignment proved to be a death sentence. Confessions that day were so numerous that, in view of the late hour, he was persuaded to stay overnight with the Brothers and to say Mass the next morning for them and to preach to the students. Arrested with the Brothers the following day, he shared their fate. Although the revolutionaries eventually freed the parish priests, the fact that Father Inocencio was a religious priest and associated, however briefly, with the Brothers in the religious education of the young was enough to merit for him the martyr's crown.

A Community

This, then, was the little community of Christian Brothers serving the La Salle School, as it was popularly called, in the village of Turón. The school year began as usual in September 1934. Early in October, the Brothers were preparing for the traditional First Friday devotions when the peaceful routine of the community and the school was violently interrupted. Vowed to exercise the apostolate of the schools "together and by association," they were arrested as a community, consoled one another in prison as a community, and were executed as a community. "Greater love no community has. . . ."

3
Like Sheep to the Slaughter

The story of the arrest, detention, and execution of the eight Christian Brothers of Turón and their Passionist guest has been thoroughly documented by the testimony of eyewitnesses. Chief among these was Father José Fernández, the pastor of the parish of San Martín at the time of the uprising, who was a fellow prisoner with the Brothers during the days prior to their execution (CC, 70). It is possible, therefore, to describe in some detail the sequence of events.

The Arrest

During the evening of Thursday, October 4, 1934, rumors of impending trouble had already reached the Brothers in their community house at Turón. They heard that on the next day the signal would be given for a general strike and the beginning of revolutionary action in protest against the announcement that conservatives would be given ministerial posts in the newly formed government. The Brothers were not unduly disturbed, however, since they were not directly involved and, in any case, were more preoccupied with preparing for class and for the students' First Friday liturgy.

The Eucharist was to be celebrated on Friday by Father Inocencio de la Inmaculada, the Passionist priest who had come the previous afternoon from his monastery in Mieres to assist the parish priests in hearing the many confessions in preparation for the traditional First Friday devotions. Brother Cirilo, the Director, had invited the priest to stay with the Brothers overnight, to say Mass for the students the next day, and to give the homily.

On Friday morning, October 5, the Brothers arose as usual at 4:30 a.m. and assembled in the chapel for their customary religious exercises. At about six o'clock Brother Aniceto, who

as the youngest in the community was in charge of preparing the chapel for Mass, heard an insistent knocking at the door. It turned out to be Juana González, the housekeeper of the priests of the parish and sister-in-law of one of them, Father Tomás. She had just come from the *Casa del Pueblo* (House of the People), the headquarters of the workers' union, to the Brothers' house in Turón with the news that the revolution had begun. She cried excitedly:

> They have taken my husband and my son, as well as Father Tomás and the pastor with his coadjutor. Flee, my Brothers, before they can come to arrest you! Flee while there is still time! (PG-M, 86)

It seems that Father Tomás had sent his sister-in-law back to the rectory to collect some medicines that he needed, thus giving her the chance to warn the Brothers. As soon as she had hurried off to complete her errand, Brother Aniceto closed and locked the gates. After some hesitation the community decided that flight was unrealistic—there was nowhere in the small village where they could expect to hide—and that the best thing to do was to proceed at once with the Mass.

Father Ignacio had just begun the offertory of the Mass when there came from the street outside the noisy shouts of a band of fanatics. After repeated blows the iron gate to the garden outside the house was forced open and it became clear to everyone that the situation was serious. To save the Blessed Sacrament from profanation, the priest interrupted the Mass and distributed to the Brothers all the consecrated hosts that were in the tabernacle. The Brothers then retired quietly to their rooms to await the outcome.

Soon the yard outside the house was overrun with a group of about 30 armed men threatening all kinds of violence. To underscore the point, one of them shot his rifle at the house, where the bullet lodged close to the door. Brother Marciano, who was effectively deaf, was sent to the door to confront the invaders. Threatening him with their revolvers, the leaders of the wild band demanded that the Brothers surrender at once the weapons which, they maintained, the "fascists" of the Catholic Youth Society had hidden in the school. "There are no arms of any kind here," the Brother replied, once he understood what they wanted. The men then forced their way into

the house and began a thorough search, uttering threats, upsetting the furniture, and scattering and smashing things to the ground as they went along. Even a search of the cellar failed to turn up any of the weapons they had expected to find.

Disappointed in their fruitless search, the terrorists then turned to the Passionist priest and the Brothers and informed them that they were under arrest. The priest was wearing his usual cassock that made up the Passionist religious habit, whereas the Brothers were all wearing the light smock that they customarily wore in class ever since they had been forced by the laws against religious teachers to abandon their distinctive religious garb. When they came to Brother Marciano, the doorkeeper and cook, thinking he was only a hired servant, the leaders of the rebels asked him what his business was in the house. "I am the cook and a religious," he proudly replied, thereby renouncing his chance to escape. They took him along with the rest.

Without allowing them to take anything with them, an armed guard led the priest and the eight Brothers away to the *Casa del Pueblo*, which would serve as their jail in the days ahead. The Brothers' school was then converted into a central headquarters for the Committee of the Revolution.

The Prison

The Brothers were confined during the entire period of their detention in the main hall of the *Casa del Pueblo*. During the daytime the building ordinarily served as a school for children of the workers who could not be accommodated elsewhere or whose working parents did not want them enrolled in schools conducted by a religious congregation. During the evening the building served as a meeting place for a variety of political parties and workers' unions, where the members could exchange opinions, insults, and sometimes blows. It served this common purpose better than the smaller centers where each of the individual unions and parties had its own headquarters.

For the Brothers the first day of their imprisonment was the most difficult. The shades on the windows were kept closed, and the Brothers were forbidden to converse with one another lest they try to escape or offer some form of resistance.

They were closely supervised by armed guards who occasionally threatened them. The only concession was to allow them to go one at a time to use the lavatory.

It was particularly annoying to the guards that Father Inocencio was still dressed in his religious habit, so they ordered him to put it aside. Since the priest had nothing else to wear, Brother Cirilo asked one of the guards to bring him a cloak from the Brothers' house. The garment he brought was made of wool and fit so badly that the priest, who had no shirt, found it very uncomfortable. The best they could do was to give him a scarf to put around his neck in place of a shirt.

The other prisoners in the building were allowed to have food brought to them by their servants or relatives, but there was no one to bring food for the Brothers. When Don Rafael del Riego, Director of the mining company, who was detained in an adjoining room, heard of it, he gave orders that the food for the Brothers and the Passionist priest be supplied from the company kitchen, but nothing was done about that until the following day. After going all day without food, the Brothers tried with-out much success to get some sleep; some of them stretched out as best they could on the tables or on the floor.

Don Rafael del Riego

The next day, Saturday, October 6, brought a bit of relief. Early in the morning a new group of prisoners was brought in, including four engineers from the mining company who had been detained in their homes under house arrest. This brought the number of detainees from 14 to 25 or so. To provide space, the three parish priests and the young members of Catholic Action were put into the hall with the Brothers. The larger number made it easier for the prisoners to communicate with one another and thus relieved the tension.

At a certain point one of the village doctors, Don Julián Cabo Ovejero, had to be called to give an injection to help calm Brother Marciano, who had long suffered from a spine ailment and was becoming increasingly restless. The Brothers asked if

The *Casa del Pueblo* at Turón

they could send back to the school to get a mattress for him, but this request met with an outright refusal from the chief of the guards, Fermín García, nicknamed *El Casin*.

With their increased number, it was possible for the prisoners to pray aloud together from time to time, especially to join in the recitation of the rosary. The resigned and prayerful attitude of the Brothers was a source of comfort to the others. Among the Brothers themselves there was much discussion about the significance that might be attributed to the sacrifice of their lives, should it be demanded of them. Father Fernández, the local pastor and a fellow prisoner, reported these conversations:

> Their sole preoccupation in prison was to know whether their deaths would constitute a true martyrdom in the theological sense of the word. For this purpose they consulted with those of us who were priests. We convinced them that the answer was yes, for the simple reason that the revolutionaries had no other motive, no other reason to kill them, than the fact that they were religious. This as-surance filled them with great joy, and from then on they devoted themselves to preparing worthily to make the su-preme sacrifice. (CC, 29)

October 7 was a Sunday. All morning long the prisoners could hear the noise of airplanes flying overhead, which gave some hope that their liberation might be at hand. But their

captors told them that the revolution had taken hold all over Spain, and that it was only in Asturias where there were still some pockets of resistance. Of course, the prisoners had no way of knowing that the reverse was true.

At about five o'clock that Sunday evening, two members of the Committee of the Revolution came, ostensibly to show some concern for the prisoners. One of them, Ceferino Alvarez Rey, had been a student of the Brothers. "Who would have thought in those days," he said to Brother Augusto Andrés, his former teacher, "that the Colegio Nuestra Señora de Covadonga would be converted into the headquarters of the Revolution in Turón?" He assured the Brothers that the only reason for their arrest was to protect them, that otherwise they would have been at the mercy of the mob (PG, 388).

One purpose of the visit seemed to be the concern of the Committee to verify the function of Brother Marciano, the cook. Since the poor Brother was deaf, and in a state of nervousness besides, he was unable to answer the questions put to him. "Is this fellow a member of your community?" the officer asked the Brother Director. Upon receiving an affirmative answer, the investigators seemed satisfied and left.

The tone of voice of the Committee delegation led the Brothers to suspect that something was amiss. Their sense of apprehension only increased when they learned that some members of the Catholic Youth Group and two of the civil guards had been sent to the front lines to fight for the revolution. At this news it was decided that it might be well for everyone to receive the sacrament of penance. The three priests —the pastor, his coadjutor, and Father Inocencio—went to confession to each other first, then each of the Brothers in turn to his confessor of choice. From then on a great calm seems to have come over them all, for they felt somehow that the divine power would give them courage to face whatever might lie ahead.

Meanwhile, at the headquarters of the Committee, discussions were going on as to what to do with the prisoners. Father Tomás, the chaplain of the school, had earlier been transferred to another room and then quietly released. He had been in bad health and was, besides, on friendly terms with Leoncio Villanueva, the head of the Freemasons. As for the other prisoners, it seems from evidence gathered later on that there was a

difference of opinion. At Turón, more than in other cities in the hands of the revolutionaries, there was in the leaders a spirit of violence and revenge. This was the mood of men such as Silverio Castañón, Firmín García (*El Casin*), and most of the rest of the Committee of the Revolution.

Leoncio Villanueva and the Masons, on the other hand, seem to have been opposed to the assassination, above all in regard to Father Tomás and, to a degree, the other parish priests as well. These had long been resident in Turón and were not perceived as any particular threat to the revolutionary movement (PG-M, 92).

It was finally decided to carry out the execution the next day, Monday, October 8. However, the cemetery was occupied that day for the funeral of a revolutionary soldier from Turón who had been killed in the attack on Oviedo and whose body was being returned home for burial. This did not allow time to dig the trenches to bury the victims of the firing squad. The delay gave time on Monday for many of the friends of the Brothers to come before the Committee to plead for their lives. Among them were the two doctors of the village and many of the mothers who had children in the school. Their intervention proved to be in vain.

At the *Casa del Pueblo* there was nothing for the prisoners to do during the entire day of October 8 except to try to be resigned to the will of God and, in expectation of what was to come, to encourage one another to be ready to imitate the divine Master and to carry the cross to the bitter end. There was some comfort in the thought that their death would be a true martyrdom, since the only reason for it was the fact that they were either priests or religious or devoted lay Catholics.

The Tragic Ending

It took all day long for Silverio Castañón to round up enough riflemen to serve as a firing squad. In the absence of sufficient volunteers from Turón, he was finally able to recruit a motley group from those who had experience with executions in Mieres and Santullano. That evening there was a tense and prolonged meeting of the Committee in the school building now serving as a headquarters. There was a vain search for some

appearance, at least, of a legal justification other than vengeance for what they were about to do. The day had been a difficult one for them, as news came from the front lines of deaths and defeats suffered by the revolutionary forces. It seems also that among the group at headquarters there was almost continual drinking, the wherewithal supplied from the well-stocked cellars of the mining company that was now in the control of the Committee (PG, 395).

If there was any hesitation, the alcohol eventually had its effect. Toward midnight Castañón, who was finding it increasingly difficult to maintain his customary arrogance and self-control, finally grunted out the order, "*Adelante, en marcha!*"

The most touching and authentic description of what happened next is given in the words of Father José Fernández, the pastor. He wrote this account shortly after he witnessed the events:

> It was a little after one o'clock in the morning of October 9th when the door, which had been ajar, suddenly opened and there burst into the room where we were Silverio Castañón and the other fellow known as *El Casin*, both of them brandishing their pistols. With them were two other vigilantes.
>
> Everyone was asleep except the pastor and the Director of the school, who were conversing in a low voice. The Brother Director had just been telling the pastor how he had given each of the Brothers some coins in case they should become separated from one another. Some of the Brothers had been carrying 200 peseta notes, but these had been taken from them, as it was said, for the revolutionaries. The two men, finding it difficult to fall asleep, were discussing these and other such practical matters as a way of passing the time.
>
> When the officials of the Committee saw the pastor and the Brother Director talking together, one of them exclaimed, "There are two of them!" At once they ordered the Director to remove his coat and to surrender whatever he had in his pockets, and then they ordered the pastor to do the same. Then they woke up the others and ordered them also to hand over whatever they possessed, except for the watch of the coadjutor pastor and the pastor's rosary,

which they allowed them to keep. This procedure was applied only to the priests and the Brothers; the lay prisoners were not similarly treated.

The Passionist priest was sitting asleep in a chair, his head covered with a blanket. The eagle eyes of Silverio Castañón noticed him sleeping quietly, and the mayor asked us, "Who is he?" "A Passionist priest from Mieres," we replied, "who arrived here the evening that the revolution broke out. He has been in Asturias for only one month." They didn't wait for us to finish speaking, but gave the order to wake him up, which was done at once.

The priest uncovered his face to reveal a peaceful smile as if he had been dreaming of paradise. Even when he came to his feet he kept the same serene expression, despite the untimely hour and the far from peaceful scene that greeted his eyes. Like the others he was obliged to give up everything he had, which he did, although he tried to keep back a note pad in which were some notes that he had been writing all during the previous afternoon, containing no doubt his last will, as well as a locket that he had of the Blessed Virgin. But these, too, he had to surrender when they insisted on having all the documents.

They asked us, set apart in a remote corner of the room and separated from the others who had not been questioned, "What weapons do you know how to handle?" When we said that we weren't familiar with any of them, they asked, "Didn't you have to do military service?" To that, some replied, "Yes, but as religious engaged in teaching in the military academies." Others said that they had never been in the military. Only Don Román, one of the Brothers [Augusto Andrés], replied that he had been trained to handle a musket. They all replied ironically, especially *El Casin*, "That's a very good weapon, indeed!"

Then they ordered us to line up, three by three, saying to the Brothers, "Now you will learn how to do this very well." Once we did as ordered, they asked us, "Do you know where you are going?" Although our lips answered no, our hearts said that we were going to give our lives as a pledge of our faith. To our negative reply, *El Casin* said in a lofty tone, "You are going to the front lines, and then

let's see when our enemies recognize you whether they will stop shooting at us once they see you."

Requesting permission to speak, which was granted, the pastor asked, "In that case will you not permit those of us who are priests to don our cassocks? Dressed like this as seculars, we will not be recognized, and your plan will come to nothing." After a moment's hesitation, *El Casin* replied, "No, not that. Then they will believe that we are still in a monarchy, when now we are a republic!"

Then the Committee leaders went a little aside and exchanged a few words in a low voice. They returned and addressed us in this way, "You are 11, and the two police officers make 13. . . . That is too many, since they are going where the fighting is the strongest. There are two too many, and the truck cannot hold all of them, especially since some of our own men will be going with them." Then they said, "Let the two priests of the parish come over here." We obeyed and, after they questioned us about how long we had been detained, our names, and so forth, they said, "All right, stay right here. But take note that we are letting them go to be dealt with later." Then directing their attention to the Passionist priest and the Brothers, they gave the order, "*En marcha!*"

At that moment, we raised our right hands in blessing and with our lips pronounced the words of absolution, convinced as we were that they were being led to their martyrdom.

In this they were of course following the plan of the Committee by substituting for the two priests the Lieutenant Colonel and the Commander of the Police, after having despoiled them of the insignia of their office and their personal effects and putting them together with the Brothers to make up the group of eleven. (PG, 396–397)

The details of what followed have been well documented by some of those who took part in the execution. Once the Brothers were out of the *Casa del Pueblo* and into the humid night, it became fairly clear that all the talk about going to the front lines offered little hope of salvation. Confronted by about 20 armed men, silent but with their rifles at the ready, they realized that the martyrdom for which they had prepared so devoutly was near at hand.

Some years later, none other than Silverio Castañón, himself imprisoned at the time by the fascist government, described the scene:

> As soon as the Brothers and the priest came out onto the patio of the *Casa del Pueblo*, they were told that instead of going to the front lines, they would be conducted to the cemetery to be executed. The priest and the Brothers listened to the sentence without emotion, and then with a firm step and great calm they marched along with us to the cemetery.
>
> Although they knew perfectly well where they were going, they conducted themselves like sheep being led to the slaughter, without complaint, to the point where I myself, hardhearted as I am, had to admire their self-control. When we arrived at the cemetery we had to spend a few minutes waiting until the gravedigger arrived with the key to the gate.
>
> Once the gate was opened I ordered them to proceed, which they did with the same firm step as before. Arrived at the place where the trench had been prepared, we lined them up in front of it, and then we dispatched them with two rounds of fire. . . . It seemed at the last that I heard them praying in a low voice. . . . As soon as the prisoners had been killed, the revolutionaries departed, after giving instructions to the gravedigger to bury the bodies. (CC, 54)

The account of Castañón leaves out only some of the more ghastly details. When the bodies were exhumed some days later, there was evidence that some of the victims did not die at once, but had to be given the *coup de grâce* by a blow to the head with a heavy club. Also, the executioners before departing managed to despoil the bodies of their outer clothing and whatever else of value was left. Then the killers slipped away quietly in the night so as not to be recognized, most of them returning to Mieres whence they had been recruited.

Back at the *Casa del Pueblo* it was soon apparent to those who had been spared what was the fate of the eleven who had been taken away. The double barrage of shots from the direction of the cemetery in the otherwise quiet night was enough to tell the story. A new sense of anxiety spread among

the prisoners. Five days later Don Rafael del Riego and two of his engineers from the mining company were brought to the cemetery to suffer a similar fate.

4
Held in Everlasting Remembrance

The revolutionary forces were able to maintain their hold on Turón and its environs for only a short time after the tragic massacre of October 9. By October 19 civil guards and government troops were able to enter the Valley of Turón without encountering any resistance from the revolutionaries. On that same day Brother Ambrosio José, the Director at nearby Mieres, arrived at Turón to ascertain what had happened. He found the school occupied by the civil guards, and the community house littered with empty bottles and scraps of food left by the revolutionaries. Most distressing of all, he learned for the first time the details of the senseless and cruel execution of the Brothers. The Brother Provincial was not able to get to Turón until a few days later. The tragic news spread rapidly to the Brothers and the Catholic community throughout Spain, and then to the worldwide Institute of the Brothers. Letters of shock and sympathy began to pour in from all over the world.

High priority was given to the exhumation of the mortal remains of the martyrs. The gruesome operation was accomplished on the afternoon of October 21 by a team of soldiers appointed by judicial order. It was slow and difficult work, given the advanced state of decomposition of the bodies. The battered faces were hardly recognizable, if at all. The head of Brother Cirilo and that of the lieutenant colonel of the civil guards had been severed from the trunk. Brother Ambrosio was able to identify the remains only by the laundry markings on the undergarments of the victims. A Passionist priest identified the body of Father Inocencio.

The bodies of the Brothers and the Passionist priest were placed in individual caskets and reburied in another part of the cemetery. The corpses of the two civil guards were sent to the police headquarters in Oviedo. The body of Don Rafael del Riego was sent to his family in Madrid.

During the weeks that followed, solemn funeral services were celebrated all over Spain. There was no doubt in the popular mind that the victims of Turón were truly martyrs for the faith. Newspapers everywhere were glowing in their praise for the Brothers who gave up their lives rather than give up the work of providing a Christian education for their students.

In the National Congress itself, on November 15, the representative from Madrid addressed the assembly in these words:

> It was in this very chamber that Article 26 of the Constitution was approved, prohibiting religious congregations from engaging in teaching. Nonetheless, in the Asturias region, eight Brothers of the Christian Schools have been assassinated at Turón. I cannot be seated without having accorded to these apostles of education, these angels of Christian charity, the recognition and the homage that they deserve. (PG-M, 105).

On November 28 the Bishop of Barcelona celebrated a solemn Mass at the diocesan seminary to pay honor to the priests and religious who had been called upon to make the supreme sacrifice during the October Revolution. At the end of the ceremony the bishop addressed the Brother Director of Barcelona in these words:

> Brother of the martyrs, please accept my heartfelt congratulations, which are those of a pastor of souls. I rejoice together with you that the Brothers of the Christian Schools are the ones who have been called upon to shed more of their blood than anyone else for the sake of Jesus Christ. You have here a new proof of the divine favor toward your congregation. Follow with courage and without fear your apostolic mission of Christian education. I impart to all of you a special blessing. (NT, 12)

Criminal Investigations

During this time, investigations were undertaken to bring to justice those responsible for the atrocities committed during the October reign of terror. The leaders of the various revolutionary groups were rounded up and brought to the prison in

Oviedo, among them all the members of the Committee of the Revolution at Turón.

The trials took place during June of 1935. The four principal leaders were condemned to death, including Silverio Castañón and Fermín López. Leoncio Villanueva, along with 37 others, was condemned to life imprisonment. Some others were freed for lack of evidence against them, including Esteban Martín Colodron, the gravedigger at the Turón cemetery.

Not one of these sentences was ever carried out. Increasingly throughout Spain, and from abroad, there were demands for amnesty. In the elections of February 1936 the leftist forces, now known as the Popular Front, were victorious. Almost immediately all those who had been sentenced for their role in the October revolution of 1934 were exonerated and freed on the grounds that they were political prisoners rather than assassins. The outbreak of a full-scale civil war was not far away.

Triumphal Transfer

Meanwhile, once peace and order had been restored to the region of Asturias and after proper arrangements could be made, the superiors of the Brothers decided to transfer the remains of their martyred confreres to the provincial center at Bujedo. On February 25, 1935, the body of Father Inocencio was solemnly transferred to the Passionist cemetery at Mieres. On the following day the coffins of the Brothers were exhumed. While this process was underway, a solemn Mass of reparation was held in the parish church of Turón, attended by most of the local residents.

The mining company graciously offered the personnel and the vehicles necessary for the transport of the bodies, each of which had been placed in a triple coffin. On the day following the Mass everything was ready. The departure from Turón and the rest of the subsequent journey were occasions for an impressive turnout of the faithful and demonstrations of sympathy and religious devotion.

At Palencia, for example, where the Brothers had a large boarding school dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes and where three of the martyrs had been stationed, an enormous crowd

gathered to welcome the procession. At the head of the reception line was the Governor, accompanied by the civilian and military authorities, the clergy from all four parishes in the city, the resident students of the Brothers' school, and the members of the Catholic Lay Association. The vicar-general of the diocese, surrounded by the canons of the cathedral, pronounced a solemn absolution over the mortal remains of the witnesses to Christ; the responses were sung with respectful enthusiasm by the huge crowd. At Duenas the Trappist Fathers offered a worthy homage to the beloved dead and a cordial welcome to the Brothers accompanying the remains.

The journey, truly a triumphal procession in each of its successive stages, lasted 15 hours in all, concluding finally at Bujedo at nightfall. The chaplain of the house of formation, surrounded by other clergy from the neighboring parishes, blessed the coffins on their arrival. They were then placed in the chapter room, which had been transformed into a chapel glowing with lighted candles; each coffin was surmounted by an enormous floral wreath. The Brothers in the various departments of the house took turns during the nightlong vigil.

On the following day the final funeral services were held in the presence of a vast crowd that filled the spacious Romanesque church that served as the main chapel at Bujedo. In the center of the nave there had been erected a suitably draped catafalque, with Brothers around it as a guard of honor. After the chanting of the Office of the Dead, the choir of Brothers and students sang the polyphonic setting of the Requiem Mass composed by Dom Lorenzo Perosi. The Archpriest of Miranda officiated at the altar.

Just before the final absolution, the chaplain of the Brothers at Caborana delivered a eulogy celebrating the glorious triumph of the victims, using as his text the passage from the Book of Wisdom, "In the eyes of the foolish they seem to have died, but they are not dead: they are in eternal peace."

Following the liturgical ceremonies, a long and solemn procession was formed to accompany the bodies to the cemetery. The eight coffins were carried, two by two, by some of the Brothers, priests, and close friends. The coffins were then placed in a mausoleum in the Brothers' plot in the cemetery. The monument bears this citation, in effect:

To the memory of the Brothers of the Christian Schools of the community of Turón, who generously sacrificed their lives for the love of their faith and for the Christian educa-tion of youth at one o'clock in the morning of October 9, 1934.

Such tributes were not to be the last and only kind of response, however. Less than a month later, on March 23, 1935, fire broke out in the chapter room at Bujedo where the coffins of the martyred Brothers had lain in state. The fire, of suspicious origin, spread rapidly, and a good part of the main building was destroyed before fire brigades from the neighboring towns were able to bring the blaze under control. The incident was considered to be a reprisal for the honors given to the martyrs, and a sign of the greater violence that was yet to come.

Process of Beatification

During the course of the Civil War that lasted from 1936 to 1939 so many Brothers were executed that the case for the

The monument at the tomb of the martyred Brothers at Bujedo.

The memorial stone in the cemetery at Turón

beatification of the Turón martyrs receded somewhat into the background. Nevertheless, from the time that the news had first spread of the atrocities during the 1934 uprising in Asturias, the innocence and heroism of the Turón Brothers left little doubt in the popular mind that they were indeed martyrs for the faith. It would only be a matter of time before the church authorities would take the necessary steps to make it official.

Exactly ten years to the day after the Turón massacre, on October 9, 1944, the necessary first step was taken with the opening of the diocesan process at Oviedo. During the course of the following nine months, some 45 witnesses—Brothers, priests, relatives, and acquaintances—were interrogated as to the events themselves, the character of the individual men, the history of their vocation, their apostolic work, and their attitude as they prepared to die. The case was then sent to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints in Rome.

The Roman process always moves slowly in these matters. As a matter of policy, a delay of at least 50 years is normally expected before anything definitive can be done. In October 1984 the 50th anniversary of the triumphant death of the Turón Brothers was celebrated with solemn ceremonies at Bujedo. It was not long afterwards, in June 1985, that the indefatigable Brother Leone Morelli, the Postulator General for the Institute of the Brothers, was able to announce that the process was entering its final stages.

In January 1988 the *Positio super martyrio* was published by the Vatican. This volume of some 500 pages, intended for the use of the theologians and cardinals entrusted with the case, contained a summary of all the relevant documents and testimony gathered in the diocesan and the Roman process. In December 1988 the Vatican published the *Relatio et Vota* containing the reports of the nine theologians assigned to determine whether the death of the eight Brothers and the Passionist priest could be formally considered a martyrdom. The reports are unanimous in their affirmative response.

To come to this conclusion, the theologians had to establish from the evidence two main facts: first, that the persecutors were motivated by a deep hatred of the faith; second, that the victims willingly accepted death. There was not much doubt on either count.

Political motivation was ruled out, since the Brothers at Turón had kept to themselves and did not meddle in political affairs. Personal motivation was excluded, because none of them had been in Turón for more than a year, and they were not known personally to their tormentors. The fact that the revolutionaries would have released the Brother cook if he had not admitted to being a religious was considered significant, as also the fact that the parish priests were let go because they were neither religious priests nor involved in the Christian education of young people. It was obvious that the nine martyrs met their death simply because they were religious men engaged in the work of instructing a new generation in the Catholic faith.

In a formal meeting on December 9, 1988, the theological commission in Rome unanimously accepted as martyrdom the death of the Turón Brothers and their priest companion. On May 16, 1989, the Commission of Cardinals ratified the decision of the theologians. The approval of Pope John Paul II then cleared the way for the beatification ceremony to proceed on April 29, 1990.

The only concern expressed by the Brothers in the uncertain days of their imprisonment was that their death be considered a true martyrdom. Now the highest authority in the Church assures them and everyone else that such is indeed the case.

Part Two
Tarragona 1936

5
The Civil War

In the elections held on February 16, 1936, the leftist coalition, known as the Popular Front and composed of republicans and socialists, was victorious. It replaced by a narrow margin the uneasy and generally ineffective coalition of conservatives and moderate socialists that had been in power since the elections of November 1933. Once they were back in power, the leftist forces unleashed their fury against the forces on the right: the conservative politicians, the industrialists, the banks, the police, and in a special way, the Catholic Church. Churches were ransacked and burned; schools and seminaries were taken over and turned to secular purposes; priests, bishops, and religious Brothers and Sisters had to go into hiding to escape arrest or mob violence. The only stabilizing force was the army, but it was powerless to act against the policies of the government it was sworn to defend.

The effect was to divide the Spanish nation into two opposed camps, each with its own ideology. The prevalent violence and lawlessness, together with the fact that the new government under Largo Caballero hailed in its rhetoric the advent of "the dictatorship of the proletariat," only stiffened the opposition. Finally, on July 17, 1936, beginning in Morocco, the army under General Franco led the revolt that spread rapidly to mainland Spain.

This is not the place to detail the story of the agonizing civil war that devastated Spain over the next three years. The internal issues, complex as they were—such as workers' rights, social and economic reform, and church and state relations involving education and freedom of the press—might have been resolved peacefully if cooler heads had prevailed. But the two dominant ideologies were so opposed, the rhetoric so one-sided and inflammatory, that polarization and armed conflict seemed the only solution.

The National Front, on the right, was strongly anti-Marxist in the face of what it saw as the Red threat to the traditional character of Catholic Spain. The Popular Front, on the

left, was equally determined to eliminate from Spanish society all traces of Fascism, which in the minds of many included the dominant influence of the Catholic Church. Both sides sought and obtained help from abroad. Although most European countries and the United States tried to maintain neutrality, the Soviet Union helped to organize and maintain the International Brigade, while Germany and Italy supplied help to Franco.

The senseless bombing by Nazi planes of the small town of Guernica on April 26, 1937, an event immortalized in the painting of the same name by Picasso, only served to stir up a wave of antifascist and anti-Franco sentiment in the Western democracies. In a sense, what had started as an internal struggle in Spain rapidly developed into an international testing ground for the propaganda and the armed conflict that lay ahead in World War II.

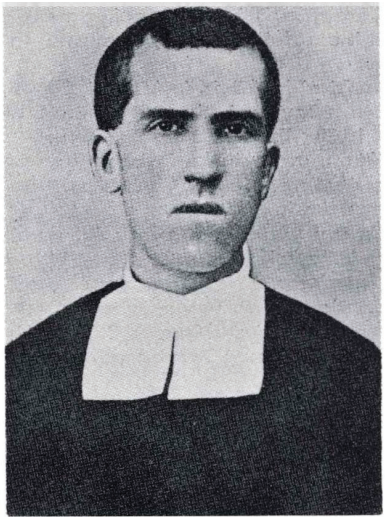
The National Front under General Franco was ultimately victorious. He had a stronger army, a more unified and religiously motivated sense of purpose, and the control as well as the support of the food-producing areas of the country. The Popular Front, on the other hand, with its strength drawn mostly from the major cities, was internally divided among various shades of republicans, socialists, and communists, and lacked, besides, consistent political and military leadership. On March 28, 1939, the Nationalist forces entered the half-starved capital of Madrid, and the war was over. Something close to 250,000 Spaniards had lost their lives in the three years that the fighting lasted.

During the war the persecution of Catholics was relentless in those areas controlled by the popular government. It was enough for a person to be caught carrying a religious medal or a rosary to be condemned to death. Not only were priests and religious driven from their churches and monasteries, but they were actively hunted down and forced to declare support for the regime or die. Under the two principal leaders of the government, José Giral and Largo Caballero, known as the Spanish Lenin, there were put to death 4,184 secular priests, including many bishops, 2,365 religious men, 283 religious women, and an undetermined number of the Catholic laity. The characteristic cry of defiance that many of them uttered in the face of torture and death was *Viva Cristo Rey! Viva Es-*

paña! In October 1936, Pope Pius XI did not hesitate to refer to them all as martyrs for the faith.

Among the 2,365 religious men who gave their lives for the faith during the civil war, 165 were members of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In a way, this seems to make the significance of the eight martyrs of Turón pale by comparison. The fact, however, that they were the first to suffer, the clear evidence that they understood what was happening to them and why, and their careful preparation and heroic behavior as they faced the supreme sacrifice have helped to single them out as prototypical. In due time, no doubt, the opportunity will be given to recount the heroic deeds of the many other Brothers who followed them and to celebrate their courage and fidelity in the same cause.

6
Brother Jaime Hilario (Manuel Barbal Cosán)



There is good reason in this context to focus on the case of at least one of the later victims of the populist regime. The execution of Brother Jaime Hilario is well documented and also paradigmatic, so much so that the investigation of his martyrdom was given some priority in the Roman Congregation for the Causes of the Saints as it began to examine the thousands of cases of martyrdom resulting from the Spanish Civil War. It is appropriate, therefore, to tell his story.

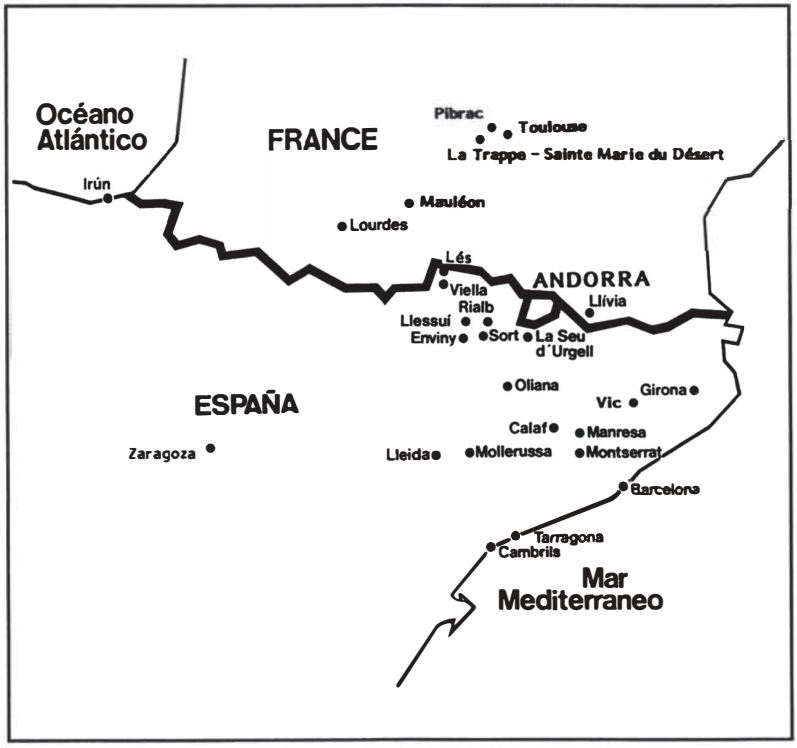
Manuel Barbal Cosán was born on January 2, 1898, in Enviny, a small town in the province of Lerida in the diocese of La Seu d'Urgell. In this remote village at the base of the Pyrenees, and under the influence of his hardworking and devout Catholic parents, the young lad became distinguished by his serious nature that had, at the same time, a touch of poetry and romance.

Having completed his elementary studies in the boarding school conducted by the Vincentian Fathers in Rialb, he sensed that God was calling him to the priesthood. In October 1910, little more than 12 years old and with the blessing of his parents, he entered the minor seminary at La Seu d'Urgell. He was successful in his studies, but soon he began to have hearing problems and was advised to return to his home. Convinced that the Lord was calling him to his service, Manuel

persisted in seeking out an alternative to the priesthood. He was overjoyed when he learned that the Institute of the Brothers would accept him.

At that time, candidates from northeastern Spain were sent to make their novitiate at Irún, across the border in France. After some months spent at Mollerussa learning French, Manuel entered the novitiate, and on February 24, 1917, he was given the religious habit and the name Jaime Hilario. The Director of Novices in Irún was Brother Junien Victor, who was later to become Superior General of the Brothers' Institute.

Immediately after the novitiate and without further preparation, perhaps because he was older than the other novices and somewhat better educated by reason of his seminary courses, Brother Jaime was assigned to Colegio San José at



Map of Cataluña

Mollerussa, where he taught successfully for five years. In 1923 he was sent to Manresa to teach Latin, but a recurrence of his hearing problems forced him to abandon the classroom to work for a time in the garden.

After three more years in various communities, Brother Jaime was sent back to France to teach religion to the novices at Pibrac. A year later, in August 1927, he made his perpetual profession. After eight years in Pibrac, Brother Jaime returned to Spain, at first to the community at Calaf. In December 1934 he was assigned to work in the garden at the house of formation at San José de Cambrils in Tarragona. By then his deafness had made it impossible for him to continue teaching.

On July 17, 1936, Brother Jaime left Cambrils with the intention of visiting his family at Enviny. He got as far as Mollerussa when the Civil War broke out on the following day. He was immediately identified as a Brother and put under house arrest with a local family. In August he was removed to a cell in the jail at Lleida. On December 5 he was transferred, together with four other Brothers, to Tarragona, his legal residence, and confined in a prison ship, where still others of their confreres were already being detained.

On January 13, 1937, Brother Jaime was hailed before the People's Tribunal at Tarragona. His lawyer advised him not to reveal his identity as a religious Brother, but simply to state his occupation as a gardener. In that way he would be perceived as a worker rather than a member of the clergy. But this he would not do. During the interrogation Brother Jaime had difficulty hearing the questions and had to have them repeated in a loud voice. When asked about the apparent contradiction between his status as a Brother and his work as a gardener, he replied that there was no contradiction: since he was deaf, gardening was the only contribution he could make to his religious Institute. That statement sealed his doom.

Two days later the formal trial was held before the same tribunal, meeting in what had been the diocesan seminary building. The prosecutor demanded the supreme penalty in these words:

> Either we kill these people, or they will kill us. If we condemn to death those who fight against our comrades in the front lines, how much more should we condemn those who dedicate themselves to educating fascists. For this reason,

> I ask the Court not to give way to sentimentality, but rather to confirm with its decision the death penalty that I ask to be imposed upon the accused. (JD, 28)

The president of the court then pronounced the death sentence. Brother Jaime received the verdict with tranquility and resignation, simply quoting the favorite expression of Saint De La Salle, the Founder of the Brothers, "God be blessed!"

He wrote to his blood brother, who was employed by the Trappists near Toulouse:

> I have just been condemned to death by the People's Tribunal. Don't cry, dear brother. When you hear my name mentioned, don't give way to sadness, but raise your eyes to heaven and be assured that I shall not forget you there. I am going to shed my blood for God, for my country, and for my Institute. (NM, 41)

To the rest of his family he wrote:

> I have just been judged and condemned to death. I accept the sentence joyfully. They could not accuse me of anything. I was condemned simply because I am a religious. Do not weep. I do not deserve to be wept over, because I am not a criminal. I die for God and for my country. Farewell. I will be waiting for you in paradise. (*Ibid.*)

As he was being led to execution, he said to those around him:

> God be blessed! In heaven I shall pray a great deal for all of you. What more could I ask for than to die, when my only crime is that I am a religious and that I have worked for the Christian education of youth? (*Ibid.*, 42)

On the afternoon of January 18, 1937, Brother Jaime was brought to the cemetery known as *La Oliva*. The firing squad was positioned a short distance away while he remained standing, his arms crossed on his chest and his eyes raised to heaven. He exclaimed, "To die for Christ is to live, my friends!"

The order was given to fire. The shots rang out and were echoed in the nearby hills. A bit shaken and pale, but still smiling, Brother Jaime had not even been touched. Impatiently and a bit nervously, the commander gave the order to fire again. The victim remained standing, this time with a

slight wound in the arm, but still fixing his assailants with the look of a lamb ready to be immolated. This was too much for the soldiers, who threw aside their weapons and ran away crying, "A miracle! A miracle!" Then the commander, enraged, came up to the Brother still standing there, shouted a gross insult, and fired five shots at close range. The victim fell dead at his feet.

While the cause of the Turón martyrs was being examined by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, the case of Brother Jaime Hilario was moving forward in a parallel investigation. The same rigid standards were applied to guarantee that the conditions for authentic martyrdom were present: the fact that the arrest and execution of Brother Jaime were motivated by hatred for God and religion, his own awareness of the religious significance of his death, and his willingness to accept death as a witness to the faith.

After consultation with committees of cardinals and theologians, the Congregation presented the Pope with the evidence that the beatification could proceed. Together with the eight Brothers and the Passionist priest from Turón, Brother Jaime Hilario was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 29, 1990. Thus the Lasallian litany grows ever longer: Saint John Baptist de La Salle; Saints Benilde, Miguel, and Mutien-Marie; Blessed Solomon, Arnold, and Scubilion; and now the beatified martyrs from Turón and their confrere from Tarragona.